THE MISSING POCKET BOOK

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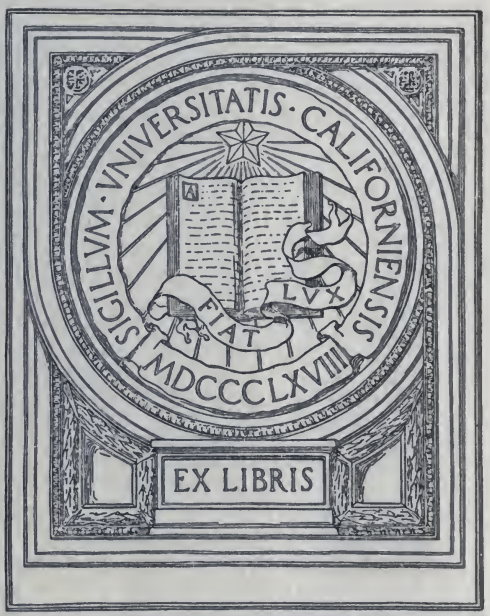
BY HARRY CASTLEMON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The Sheriff and the Cattlemen.

LUCKY TOM SERIES.—No. 3.

THE MISSING POCKET-BOOK

OR

TOM MASON'S LUCK

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BY

HARRY CASTLEMON

AUTHOR OF "THE GUNBOAT SERIES," "ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES," "WAR SERIES," ETC.

THE JOHN C. WINSTON CO.,

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THE MISSING POCKET-BOOK;

OR,

TOM MASON'S LUCK.

CHAPTER I.

RIGHT IN THE MIDST OF IT.

CATTLEMEN AND FARMERS READY FOR WAR.

FORT WORTH, August 5, 18—. One hundred and seventy-five thousand head of cattle are being slowly drifted and driven from the drought-parched sections of Northwestern Texas into Jacks County, along the waters of the West Fork of Trinity. The herders who accompany them demand that they must have grass and water, or blood. The farmers, who will be greatly damaged by the passage of these immense herds, are arming and say the cattle shall not come in—that they must be driven back at all hazards. To permit them to pass means fences destroyed, crops ruined, and the meagre supply of water exhausted; to turn them back means death to the cattle and financial disaster to the men who own them. To-day the news was carried from house to house, and the farmers are turning out to a man, resolved to rendezvous on Bear Creek and forbid

the driving of the cattle through their lands. Large squads have gone to the front, and they are well-armed and desperate. Sheriff Reins will be on hand to-morrow, and so will a company of militia under command of Captain Fuller. Several conflicts, involving the loss of six or seven lives, have already taken place between the cattlemen and the farmers, the particulars of which have not yet found publicity.

Of all the boys into whose hands this story may fall, and who make it a point to read the daily papers, I venture to say that not one in a hundred will remember that he ever saw the above despatch, which was flashed over the wires one bright summer morning a few years ago; but if those boys had been on the ground as I was, and witnessed the thrilling and affecting scenes that transpired before and after that despatch was written, they would have seen some things that time could never efface from their memories.

If ever I saw suffering cattle or determined, almost desperate, men, who were fairly spoiling for a fight, it was on that sweltering August day when a big brown-whiskered man, a wealthy farmer of Jacks County, accompanied by the sheriff and two deputies, rode

up to the wagon and demanded to see "the boss." Around the wagon were gathered a weary and dusty party of men and boys, who had come there to slake their thirst, and John Chisholm, the man to whose enterprise and push the great Texas cattle trade owed its existence, was just raising a cup of the precious fluid to his lips. I say "precious" because our supply was limited, and the nearest stream far away.

"It tastes as though it had been boiled for a week," said he, after he had moistened his parched mouth, "but every drop of it is worth its weight in gold. Touch it lightly, boys, for there is no telling when we shall be able to fill the cask again. Have any of the scouts come in yet? If we don't find a pool pretty soon we shall all be ruined. Just see there!" he added, waving his hand toward the back trail. "A blind man could easily follow our route, for every rod of it is marked with dead beeves."

It would have taken something besides a "pool" of water to quench the thirst of that multitude of cattle, which were drifting along

a mile or so in advance of the wagon, almost concealed by the suffocating cloud of dust that hung over them and pointed out their line of travel. Just how many of them there were in the herd the most experienced cattleman could not guess, for the flanks of the drove as well as its leading members were far out of sight. There were more than a dozen outfits mixed up together, no attempt having been made to keep them apart; nor was there any effort made to control their movements beyond keeping them headed toward the West Fork of Trinity, the nearest point at which water could be obtained. The suffering beasts complained piteously as they plodded along, and now and then deep mutterings of challenge and defiance, followed by a commotion somewhere in the herd, would indicate the spot where perhaps a dozen of the half maddened animals had closed in deadly combat. It was little wonder that the sixty bronzed and weather-beaten men who accompanied them were in fighting humor, and ready to resist to the death any interference with their efforts to find water or grass. They were almost con-

sumed with thirst themselves. Every drop of water they drank was brought along in the wagon, and there was so little of it that no one thought of taking more than a swallow at a time. Scouts had been sent out early in the morning with instructions to search everywhere for a water-course, and it was as Mr. Chisholm enquired about them, and handed back the cup he had drained, that the sheriff rode up and asked to see "the boss."

"'Pears to me as if this outfit was bossing itself," replied Mr. Chisholm, facing about in his saddle and looking sharply at the newcomers. "You can see for yourself, without looking, that all we can do is to keep the critters pointed toward the West Fork. But you don't belong on our side of the house. Where might you hail from?"

"I am sheriff of this county, and came out to tell you that you must not trespass on the grounds of our farmers," answered the officer.

"Well, then, what do you come to us for?" enquired Mr. Chisholm, while the men around him scowled savagely and played with the locks of their rifles. "Go and serve your

warning on the critters. Can't you see that some of them are miles ahead of us? How are we going to turn them back when our horses are nigh about as ready to drop as the cattle are? I tell you it can't be done!"

"Don't you know it means ruin to us farmers if we allow those famishing cattle to get into our fields?" demanded the brown-whiskered man, who seemed quite as ready and willing to fight as the cattlemen were. "They will break down our fences and eat up the very crops on which our lives depend. Besides, there are no more grass and water in the country than we want ourselves."

"I'm powerful sorry to hear you say that, but I don't see what we are going to do about it," said Mr. Chisholm. "We've got to go somewhere now that we have started."

The sheriff opened his lips to speak, but the brown-whiskered man was too quick for him.

"You don't know what you are going to do about it, don't you?" he said, with a savage emphasis. "Well, I will tell you. When you get to the top of that swell yonder you

will see, a couple of miles off, a long line of willows."

"Now, if that isn't the best piece of news I have heard for a week I wouldn't say so!" exclaimed the cattleman. "Where there's timber there is water, of course. I thought the critters were a-travelling along a trifle pearter than they were a while back. Sam, you drive on ahead with the wagon and fill up the cask, and the rest of us will kinder scatter out on the flanks and head the critters toward the willows our friend speaks of."

"Will you let me get through with what I have to say?" shouted the farmer, his face growing white with anger. "You go near those willows if you dare! There are more than two hundred men hidden among them, and if our pickets can't turn your cattle back they'll shoot them!"

"Will, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Chisholm, his face wearing a good-natured smile, that was very aggravating to the brown-whiskered farmer. "I hope not, for if you shoot our stock we'll have to shoot you to pay for it. Look a-here," he added, turning his horse

about and riding up close to the man he was addressing, "I tell you once for all, stranger——"

"Hold! I command the peace!" cried the sheriff, seeing that the men and boys around the wagon were moving up to support their leader. "Keep back, all of you!"

"The peace hasn't been broken yet," replied Mr. Chisholm, "and I assure you that I and my friends have no intention of breaking it; but our watchword is, 'Grass and water, or blood!' and it is for you to decide which it shall be. We are not the men to stand by with our hands in our pockets and see our stock perish for want of something to eat and drink, and you misjudge us if that is the kind of fellows you took us for. You farmers were very kind to yourselves when you ran your fences along every water-course in the State, so't we cattlemen could not get to it. Water 's free and we want our share of it."

"But our land has been paid for, and you have no right to come upon it after we have told you to keep off," said the farmer.

"Some of you have paid for the land you raise crops on and some are squatters the same as we cattlemen are," answered Mr. Chisholm, becoming earnest, but still fighting to keep down his rising anger. "There are miles and miles of these streams been fenced in and shut off from us stock-raisers without any warrant of law, and now we are going to walk over some of them same fences."

"If you attempt it we shall shoot you down like dogs!" said the farmer fiercely, and as he spoke he lifted his rifle an inch or two from the horn of his saddle, as if he had half a mind to begin the shooting then and there.

"Easy, easy, Mr. Walker," interposed the sheriff, laying his hand upon the angry man's arm. "We've got the right on our side and the whole power of the State behind us, and there's no need that you should get yourself into trouble by taking matters into your own hands. I warn you to turn back," he continued, addressing himself to Mr. Chisholm. "I am an officer of the law, and if you do not pay some attention to what I say I shall be obliged to arrest you."

The cattleman laughed, not loudly, but heartily and silently.

"I reckon you're a new man who has just been put into office," said he, as soon as he could speak. "If you were an old hand at the business you would know that it would take pretty considerable of a posse to arrest any man in this outfit. I wouldn't try it if I were sheriff."

"Well, you have heard my warning," said Mr. Walker, "and the blame for whatever happens will be on your own head. Nearly all the farmers in the county have assembled to resist your advance, and they sent me out here to tell you that you have come far enough. Now, will you turn back or not?"

"I aint got much patience with a man who has two good eyes in his head to keep on asking such a question as that. Of course we'll not turn back! We can't!"

"Then we shall drive you back," said Mr. Walker. "That's all there is about it. Because the drought has ruined your business you need not think we are going to let you ruin ours."

The farmer rode away, shaking his head and muttering to himself, and paying no sort of attention to the sheriff, who spurred to his side and tried to reason with him. After a while the sheriff came back to expostulate with the leader of the cattlemen; but the latter waved him aside.

"I don't blame you, Mr. Officer," said he. "You have done nothing but duty in warning us not to trespass on them farmers' grounds, but you see how we are fixed, don't you? We can't stop where we are. All the cowboys in Texas could not turn the critters back now that they have got a sniff of the water that is flashing along sparkling and cold behind them willows, and what is there left for us but to go on? All we ask of you and your posse is to keep out of the way. We cattlemen know how to take care of ourselves."

"But don't you see that I can't keep out of your way?" demanded the sheriff. "As an officer it is my duty to oppose your further progress!"

"Then it will be my duty to ride over you

rough-shod," said the cattleman cheerfully. "I don't want to do that, for you seem to be a good sort, even if you are an officer. If you will be governed by the advice of one who knows more about this country and the men who live in it than you are ever likely to learn, you will ride down to the willows and tell them farmers to fall back and give our perishing stock a chance at the water. If they will listen to you there will be no trouble. Me and my friends will camp nigh the stream to-night, hold a council of war in the morning, and like as not we'll come to some sort of an understanding. But I can't spend any more time with you. If you or the farmers are going to force a fight upon us, we must get ready for it."

So saying Mr. Chisholm waved his hand to the officer and rode away, leaving us three boys from the North, who had ridden up close to hear this consultation and the threats it contained, in a state of dreadful uncertainty. We had come from our homes, somewhere near Denver, which at that time was little more than a sprinkling of miner cabins, with

no such thoughts as this in our minds, and here we were right in the midst of it—civil war! We had come down there to invest a few hundred dollars in cattle. We thought we could make something by it. By keeping far to the eastward, along the banks of the Red River, we had got beyond reach of the Comanche and Kiowas and other Indians who felt inclined to steal everything we had, and then by turning rapidly to the west had found ourselves right among the cattlemen almost before we knew it.

You remember that there were three of us boys—Elam Storm, now no longer moody and reticent, but hail fellow well met with everybody, for we had found the nugget of which he had been in search for so many years; Tom Mason, who went by the name of "Lucky Tom"; and myself, Carlos Burton, upon whom devolves the duty of writing this story. We had seen some adventures during our long ride, some that I would gladly like a chance to relate; but they differed so widely from the scenes we passed through among those cattlemen that I am glad to pass

them by to tell this story of "Tom Mason's luck." Tom was a lucky fellow, that's a fact, and for a runaway boy he had a good deal of pluck. I don't know that he thought of making any money at the time he was working with us, but at the same time he took the right way to get it. You know he was trying to scrape together five thousand dollars, the amount he stole from his uncle—a large sum for a boy of his age to make; but he had that amount and more too when he went home. I will tell all about it when I get to it.

At length, when we had been so long on our journey that Elam and Tom declared that I had missed my way, we ran across a fence, and that night we struck the farmer's house. I noticed that there was corn on the other side of the fence, and that instead of being healthy and green and thrifty-looking, it was stunted and its leaves were beginning to turn yellow. It looked as though it was all ready to gather, only there was not the sign of an ear on any of the stalks that we could see. I found out the reason for this when we put up at the farmer's house that night,—the first house we

had stayed in since leaving Uncle Ezra's,—when he told us that there had not been a drop of rain in that part of Texas for sixteen months. Water was beginning to get scarce, and the worst of it was, the grass on the school-lands, miles away where all these cattle were pastured, was burning up, and they expected every day to find an army of famishing cattle coming down upon them.

"And that's something we can't stand," said the farmer. "We have only a little grass and water for our own use, and those cattle will use up all we have got. More than that, they will break down our fences and ruin our crops so that we shan't have a thing to go on. That's one thing we have to contend with in Texas—long droughts."

That was one thing I hadn't thought of, and when we started the next day I took particular notice of the grass and water and found that they were tolerable scarce, every little mud hole in which there was water being fenced in to keep their stock away from it. I had never been in that part of Texas before, and I found that water was hard

to get at, we having to fill our bottles to last us all day; but I supposed it was characteristic of the country. Of course the little stock that the farmers had was thrifty and fat, as well they might be, for they had water enough, only not as much as they wanted; but the farther we went into the country the worse grew the situation. We often had to beg for water, and it was the first time I ever did such a thing in my life.

At last we got beyond the range of the farmers, and then we found what suffering for water meant. We were generally able to find a mud hole or two in which water had been, and which was not entirely dry, and by digging down in it would get enough to quench our thirst, and there we would stay until the next morning to enable our horses to gain strength enough to carry us; but there was no grass for them to eat. Everything was dried up. Two nights we spent without water. We had enough in our bottles for ourselves, but our poor horses were obliged to go thirsty. Elam I knew was all right. He would keep on until I gave the word to go back, and if his

horse played out, he would shoulder his pack and go ahead on foot, but I looked for a complaint from Tom. It is true he looked pretty glum when his horse came up to him in the morning and said as plainly as he could that he was thirsty, and Tom could count every bone in his body, but never a word of protest did I hear from him. He would get on and ride as if nothing was the matter.

One afternoon we came within sight of a long line of willows which we knew lined a stream, the first we had seen for many a day, and near them was a large herd of cattle ranging about and trying to find enough to eat. A little nearer to us, on a little rise of ground, we saw a horse, his rider having dismounted to give him a chance to browse. He saw us as soon as we did him, and shaded his eyes with his hand and looked at us. Then he picked up his rifle and held it in the hollow of his arm.

"What is he going to do?" said Tom. "Is he going to try to keep us away from that water?"

"We will soon know," I replied. "I never

knew a cowboy to be armed with a rifle before. It proves that there has been somebody here after his water, and he wants to be prepared to meet them at long range."

It was four miles to where he was, and it took us all of an hour to get up there. It seemed as if our horses couldn't raise a trot to save their lives. As we made no move to raise our weapons, he finally dropped his to the ground and leaned upon it.

"How-dy!" said I, as soon as we got within speaking distance. That is the term that Western men always use in addressing one another. "I'm almost dead for a drink, and have come here to see if you would give us some."

"You are alone, I take it?" said the cowboy.

"We are alone," said I.

"There's nobody behind you with a big drove of cattle, is there?"

"Nobody at all. We came down here to buy stock, but I don't believe we want any now."

"You can have all we've got," said he, with

a smile. "We'll sell 'em to you at a dollar apiece."

I looked around at the walking skeletons he was willing to dispose of at so meagre a price. They were too far away for me to see much of them, but still I could tell that they were gaunt and scraggy in the extreme. Some of them were lying down flat on their sides, with their heads extended, and when a steer gets that way he is in a bad fix.

"I had no idea that your steers were in such shape," said I. "Are some of them dead?"

"Oh, no; there's plenty of life left in them yet. You will find plenty of water on the other side of those willows. You see some cattlemen came up here the other day from the same direction you came from, looking for grass and water, and said they were going to come in at all hazards; that's what made me pick up my rifle when I saw you."

"We aint seed no cattlemen down this way," said Elam. "We aint seed anything but farmers."

We were too thirsty to waste any more time in talking, and so we rode down on the other

side of the willows to find the "plenty of water" the cowboy spoke of. Well, there was plenty of it, such as it was, but it was scattered along the creek in little holes, and had been trampled in by the cattle until it was all roiled up; a filthy place to drink, but boys and horses went at it, and by the time we had got all the water we wanted there wasn't much left in that hole. We filled our bottles, saw our horses drink all they needed, and then mounted and rode back to where we had left the hospitable cowboy.

"I don't call that plenty of water," said Tom, who nevertheless had been a good deal revived by the hearty swig he had taken. "I wish you had some of the water that was overflowing the Mississippi valley when I left it. It was enough to flood this whole country."

"Well, pilgrim, it is enough for us, situated the way we are now. I have seen the time when that bayou down there was booming full, and you would have to wait for a week before you could cross it. I suppose you would like a roof to shelter you to-night, wouldn't you?" said the cowboy. "Well, if

you will follow the creek up about ten miles, you will find the ranch of Mr. Davenport, my boss. He will give you plenty to eat and a shake-down, but your horses will fare hard for grass."

"Thank you! We would like something a little different from the bacon and crackers we have been living upon so long," said I. "Mr. Davenport isn't so hard up as his cattle?"

"Oh, bless you, he's got plenty. He got a whole wagon load of things last night."

Thanking the cowboy again for his kindness in showing us the water, we rode away. The route we followed took us directly through his cattle, and I was not much surprised when I remembered what the cowboy had said about selling them for a dollar apiece. I never saw such poverty-stricken cattle in my life. Even the bulls paid no sort of attention to us, and we told one another that we thought our trip to Texas had not amounted to anything, and that we would have to wait until the next spring before we could take any cattle home with us. While we were talking the matter over, Tom pointed out in the distance the whitewashed walls of Mr. Davenport's ranch.

CHAPTER II.

MR. DAVENPORT'S SECRET.

THE nearer we approached to the ranch the more like a home place it looked to us, the only thing that did not appear natural being the hayracks that were usually piled up for the horses. These were all gone, thus proving that the ranchman had not been able to provide any more for the benefit of his steeds that were to carry him and his cowboys during all sorts of weather. Of course there could be no hay while the grass that was to furnish it was all burned up. As we drew nearer we discovered a man and a boy sitting on the porch. They did not wait for us to speak to them, but the boy got up with his face beaming all over with smiles, while the man, who seemed to be a sort of invalid, kept his chair.

"Strangers, you're welcome to Hardscrabble," said he. "Alight and hitch. Your

horses won't go very far away, and so you can turn them loose."

"Thank you," said I. I was expected to do all the talking. "Do we address Mr. Davenport?"

"That is my name," returned the invalid. "And I see you are boys, too. Bob will be glad of that. Come up here."

It did not take us very long to remove our saddles and bridles from our horses and carry them up on the porch. Then we shook hands with Mr. Davenport and his son Bob, and took the chairs that were promptly brought out to us.

"You are very young men to be travelling around this way," said the invalid. "I shouldn't think that your parents would permit it."

"Well, I don't know that we have any parents to say what we shall do. We are alone in the world, with the exception of Tom here, who has an uncle in Mississippi. We have come a thousand miles to buy some cattle; but I don't think, from what I have seen of your cattle, that we shall want any."

"Oh, this drought is simply awful," said the invalid, rising up in his chair. "We haven't had a drop of rain for sixteen months, and if it keeps on much longer we shall all die in the poor-house. The route you came led you through a portion of my herd. I want to know if you ever saw such a sorry looking lot of cattle as they are?"

This seemed to be the opportunity that Mr. Davenport was waiting for, and he began and told us all about those troublous times in Texas during the past two years, and he said that the drought and the farmers were to blame for it. There had been a period in the history of the State when the stockmen had things all their own way; when their herds roamed over almost two thousand square miles of territory, going wherever grass and water were most abundant, and attended by only a few Mexican vaqueros, whose principal business it was to see that their employer's outfit did not become mixed up with cattle belonging to somebody else. But, of course, this state of affairs could not continue forever in a country like ours. The soil of Texas was

as well adapted to agriculture as it was to stock raising, and it was not long before people began to find it out.

When the tide of immigration begins setting toward any State or Territory, it is astonishing how quickly it will become filled up. In a very short time the farmers grew to be a power in the cattle lands of Texas. Of course they settled along the water courses, or as close to them as they could get, and when they selected their land they fenced it in and turned it up with the plough, thus depriving the cattlemen of just so many acres of pasture, and in some instances shutting them off from the streams.

Of course, too, bad blood existed between these two classes from the very first. The cattlemen saw their limits growing smaller day by day, and they did not take it very much to heart when their half wild cattle broke through the fences and ruined the fields upon which the farmers had expended so much labor; but they got fighting mad when the farmers sued them in the courts and were awarded heavy damages for their crops.

Neighborhood rows and civil wars on a small scale were of common occurrence, and during this particular summer the long to be remembered drought came, and I could rest assured of one thing, and that was, matters were going to be brought to a climax. It was surely coming, and the farmers would find out one thing, and that was, that Mr. Davenport, even if he was half dead from consumption, could shoot as well as anybody.

For long months not a particle of rain fell upon the parched soil, and when the school-lands, on which large numbers of cattle grazed, were utterly barren of verdure and rendered worthless for years to come, and all the little streams went dry, the ranchmen saw ruin staring them in the face. The sufferings of the walking skeletons, which represented every dollar they had in the world, were terrible in the extreme, and grass and water must be had at any price. The nearest point at which these could be had was on the West Fork of Trinity. It was true that the most, if not all, of the land in that vicinity had been turned into farms and fenced in, but what did

the desperate cattlemen care for that? Grass and water were the free gifts of Heaven, and, if necessary, they were ready to fight for their share.

What it was that induced Mr. Davenport to say all this to me, an entire stranger, I cannot imagine, unless it was because he was so excited by the financial distress which he saw hanging over him that he must tell it to somebody. Sometimes during his narrative he would get up out of his chair and pace back and forth on the porch as if all his old strength had come back to him. His eye would kindle, until I made up my mind that if all the ranchmen were like him there would be some shooting before the summer was over. For myself I heartily wished I was safe back where I belonged.

"Do you own this land where you are located?" I asked, feeling that I must say something.

"No, nor does anybody else. We are squatters. My neighbors tell me that there was a time, not so very long ago, when this ranch was located at least a hundred miles to the

east of where it is now; but the farmers kept coming in until I am where I am now. You can't keep cattle where there is land fenced in."

"What makes you think that you are going to drive your stock away from here toward Trinity."

"Because there were a couple of men here from the lower counties, not three weeks ago, to see if I would join in," answered the invalid. "You see my cattle would get all mixed up with others and there is no telling when we would get them apart. That will make it necessary for me to hire some more men, and as you haven't got anything to do, why can't you hire out to me?"

"That's an idea," said I. "I will speak to my companions about it and see what they have to say. We would rather not have any shooting——"

"Oh, you will see plenty of it if you stay around with us," said Mr. Davenport. "The minute we get near Trinity it will commence. Why, there must be as much as one hundred and seventy-five thousand head of cattle that

need watering. It's all farms up that way too."

"I was about to say that we would rather not have any shooting around where we are," I continued. "But if there is going to be any we would rather be where we can have a hand in it."

"That's the trouble, is it?" said Mr. Davenport, with a smile.

"Yes, sir. And as far as paying us anything —why, we are here with you now, and if you will give us board it is all we ask."

I looked at Tom and he nodded his head. I glanced around for Elam, but he and Bob had disappeared. They had got into conversation and had gone off to look at something.

"That's all right," said Mr. Davenport. "That boy has been confined here on the ranch and he has not seen a companion before. I have been afraid to let him out of my sight. By the way, this man whom you have just introduced to me is all right?"

"Who? Elam? Oh, yes! You can trust him anywhere."

"I mean he wouldn't let harm come to Bob without making a fuss about it."

"No, sir," said I, rather astonished at the proposition. "I don't see that any harm can come to him out here."

"Well, I don't know," said Mr. Davenport, with a heavy sigh, which told how heavily the matter bore on his mind, "I don't know."

Not to dwell too long on incidents that are not connected with this story, I will simply say that we were presented to two of the cowboys that night at supper time as the fellows Mr. Davenport had employed to help him drive his cattle north, our duties to begin on the day the march commenced. I took a great notion to the two men—tall, rawboned, and rough, and the simple and earnest manner in which they agreed with their employer on all questions concerning the conduct of the farmers, in keeping his cattle out on the barren prairie where there was neither water nor grass to be had, made me think that their hearts were in the matter.

During the next week I noticed that Bob and Elam went off somewhere immediately

after breakfast and did not get back before night. That was all right to me, but I wanted to make sure that Elam knew what he was doing, so one day when I got a chance to speak to him in private I said:

"What do you and Bob do when you are gone all day?"

"Sho!" said Elam, with a laugh. "He just makes me lay under the trees and tell him stories."

"You are sure no harm comes to him?"

"Harm? What is going to harm him out here?"

"I don't know and his father doesn't know; but if you are wise you will keep your eyes open."

"Harm!" repeated Elam. "Well; I should like to see somebody harm him. He's got a good heart, that boy has. Be they going to shoot him?"

"I don't know what they are going to do, I tell you. If his father ever tells me I will tell you."

During all this time Mr. Davenport kept Tom and me close to himself. It was a com-

panionship that was entirely new to him in that country, and he wanted to make the most of it. Before I had been acquainted with him twenty-four hours I could see that he was different from most men who made stock raising a business, that for years he had been out there where he had nobody to talk to, and I was sure he had some secret to tell us. One day it all came out, as I knew it would, if we let the matter alone and did not trouble him with it. It was a hot day during the first of August and we were sitting there on the porch, trying to raise a little breeze by fanning ourselves with our hats. It was after dinner, and the Mexican cook had gone somewhere to sleep and we were there alone.

"I haven't always been what you see me now," said Mr. Davenport, settling back in his chair as if he had resolved upon his course. "I have a secret which I want to tell Bob, but I don't know how to go about it. It isn't anything of which I am ashamed,—many men have done the same before me,—but somehow I have let it go so long that it has become a task to me. I want to ask your advice

about it. You are comparative strangers to me, but somehow I have taken to you and want to trust you. I haven't had anyone around me to whom I was willing to confide it, and now I know that I am not long for this world I want to see Bob have his rights."

With these words the invalid began his story. It was short, but we could both see how great an effort it cost him.

Mr. Davenport was an old "forty-niner." He spent a few successful years in the gold mines and then returned to the States, and established himself as a wholesale merchant in St. Louis, his native city, and soon became known as one of its most enterprising business men. The only relatives he had in the world, except his son Bob,—who was not his son in reality,—were an unmarried uncle, who went to Texas and became a ranchman, and a half brother, who was not a relative to be proud of. Too lazy to work, this half brother, whose name was Clifford Henderson, gained a precarious living by his wits. He gambled when he could raise a stake, and borrowed of his brother when he couldn't. He was

more familiar with the police court than he was with the interior of a church, and when his generous brother's patience was all exhausted and he positively refused to pay any more of his debts, he left that brother's presence with a threat of vengeance on his lips.

"I will get even with you for this," said he. "Bob is not your son, and I will see that you don't adopt him, either. Whenever I see a notice of your death,—and you can't live forever,—I will hunt that boy up and make him know what it is to be in want, as I am at this moment."

The fact that Bob was not his son ought not to have weighed so heavily with the invalid as it did, but still he could not bear to enlighten him. He was the son of a friend in the gold mines, who, dying there, left Bob alone, and Mr. Davenport took him up. He christened him Davenport, and the boy always answered to his name. There never had been any doubt in his mind that Bob would some day come in for all his money, until this Clifford Henderson began his threatenings; and even after that

Mr. Davenport did not wake up and attend to things as he ought.

In process of time Mr. Davenport's unmarried uncle died, and in his will he made him executor and heir to all the property he had accumulated in Texas. In the hope that a change in the climate might prove beneficial to his health, as well as to leave that miserable Clifford Henderson and all his threatenings behind, Mr. Davenport moved to Texas and took possession of his legacy, bringing Bob with him. In fact, the two did not act like father and son, but like two brothers who could not bear to be separated. All they found when they reached Texas was a rather dilapidated old house, which was very plainly furnished, and presided over by a half-breed Mexican cook, who was so cross and surly that one could hardly get a civil word out of him. The rest of the help—there were four of them in all—were cowboys. They spent the most of their lives on the open prairie, looking out for the safety of Mr. Davenport's cattle.

"I have got everything——"

Mr. Davenport suddenly paused and put

back into his coat the large pocket-book which he had been in the act of showing to us. Then he got upon his feet and carefully closed the door leading into the cabin, and walked cautiously to one end of the porch and looked around the house, then to the other end, but came back without seeing anybody.

"One has to be careful," said he, in explanation. "I am as afraid of my help as of anything else."

"Of your help!" I exclaimed. "If there is anybody here that you are afraid of, why don't you discharge him?"

"Because I want to see what he is here for," said the invalid. "He works for nothing at all, but yet he always seems to have plenty of money. You know 'Rastus Johnson?"

Yes, we did know him, and he was one of the few people about the ranch to whom I had taken a violent dislike. He was just the man to excite the contempt of a Texan, because he couldn't ride; but when he came to Mr. Davenport's ranch six months ago, and told a

pitiful story about the luck that had befallen him in the mines, he was given odd jobs to do about the ranch for his board. There were two things that struck Mr. Davenport as peculiar, or we might say three, and tempted by something, he knew not what, he kept the man around the house as much as possible and watched his movements. One was the care he took of his six-shooters. He had a splendid pair, and when engaged in no other occupation, he was always rubbing them up until they shone like silver. The other was his story about the mines. He did not know that Mr. Davenport was an old forty-niner, and he thought he could say what he pleased to him and he would believe it. The nearest mines that Mr. Davenport knew anything of were those located about Denver, the very place we had come from; and the idea that anyone could walk a thousand miles, right through a country settled up by cattlemen and farmers, and be as poor as he was when he struck Mr. Davenport's ranch, was ridiculous. But Mr. Davenport kept this to himself. He had Clifford Henderson in mind,

and he resolved if 'Rastus attempted anything out of the way he would expose him on the spot.

As 'Rastus grew more and more at home about the ranch, other qualities developed themselves. He took to "snooping" around the house to see what he could find there, and once, when Mr. Davenport entered the ranch suddenly, he was certain that he saw 'Rastus engaged in trying to pick the lock of his desk; but 'Rastus began tumbling up his bed, and turned upon his employer with such a hearty good-morning that the invalid was inclined to believe he was mistaken.

"Yes," said I, in response to Mr. Davenport's question; "I believe we know something about 'Rastus. Some of the cowboys have told us a good deal about him. Is he the one you are afraid of?"

"I've got the whole thing right here," said Mr. Davenport, seating himself in his chair and drawing a big fat pocket-book from his inside pocket. "It contains my will, and also instructions in regard to what I want Bob to do with the rest of our herd in case any

escape the effects of the drought. It also contains a full history of the manner in which he came to me, and hints regarding those threats of Henderson—whom I sincerely trust he may never see again. In short, nothing that I could think of has been omitted."

"You don't think that Henderson would follow you down here, do you?" said Tom.

"My dear boy, you don't know anything about that man if you think he wouldn't follow me to Europe," said Mr. Davenport sadly. "If he is alive, Bob will hear from him; and that he is still alive I am forced to believe from the actions of this man Johnson. I don't expect to come back here, and I want you two boys to swear to what I have told you. You will, won't you?"

Of course Tom and I agreed to it, and then we wondered what sort of a man Clifford Henderson could be to scare his half brother so badly as that.

CHAPTER III.

'RASTUS JOHNSON.

HAVING no wish to pry into Mr. Davenport's affairs any further than he was willing to reveal them to us, we did not question the invalid, although there were some points in his story that I should have liked to have cleared up. He seemed to know that 'Rastus Johnson was employed by Clifford Henderson, and I wanted to know what reason he had for thinking so; but he was sadly used up by his talking, and settled back in his chair in a state of complete exhaustion. It was this state that troubled me. I began to think that when his time came to go he would go suddenly.

Presently Bob came up accompanied by Elam. I strolled off to find 'Rastus Johnson. You see I was as much interested in that pocket-book Mr. Davenport carried in his coat as I was in anything else. 'Rastus John-

son must have known that he carried it there, and if anything should happen while the invalid was alone the pocket-book would be found missing; and without a will where would Bob be? Henderson could claim his property as next of kin, and Bob would be left out in the cold. I knew that Tom understood all this as well as I did. At any rate I would speak to him about it the very first chance I had, and arrange it with him so as to keep Mr. Davenport under guard the whole time.

It did not take me long to find 'Rastus Johnson. The ranch stood on the edge of a little grove, and there, under one of the trees, I found the man of whom I was in search. His hat was pulled over his eyes, as if he were fast asleep, and the belt containing his revolvers lay near him on the ground. Evidently they had just received an extra rubbing. He started up as he heard my footsteps and pulled the hat off his face.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said he, with a long-drawn yawn. "How-dy. What does the old man have to say to you? He says more to

you than he has to me, and I've been on this ranch for three months."

"Yes, he has had a good deal to say to Tom and me. He has been telling us about the threats of Clifford Henderson. Seen anything of him lately?" I asked, as if I didn't care whether or not he answered my question.

I asked this abruptly, as I meant to do, and the answer I got set all my doubts at rest. The man was in the employ of Henderson—that was a fact; and while he used his own time in getting his wits about him, I busied myself in giving him a good looking over. He was a giant in strength and stature, long haired and full bearded, and when he sat up and looked at me, I knew I was looking into the eyes of a desperado of the worst sort. His clothes were not in keeping with the story of poverty he had told when he first came to Mr. Davenport's ranch. They were whole and clean, and his high-top boots looked as though they had just come from the hands of the maker. There was something about the man that made me think he was wanted somewhere else—that there was a rope in keeping

for him, if the parties who held it only knew where to find him. He looked at me for fully a minute without speaking, then rested his elbows on his knees and looked down at the ground.

"I don't know the man," said he, and he spoke so that anybody could have told that he was angry.

"There is no need of getting huffy about it," said I carelessly. "Where is he now?"

"I tell you I am not acquainted with the man," said he. "Henderson! I never heard the name before."

"No offence, I hope; but I thought from the way you acted that you were in his employ. Be honest now, and tell me when you have seen him lately."

"How have I acted?" enquired the man.

"Oh, snooping around the ranch and trying to find out things that are not intended for you to know," I answered carelessly. "You know you have been doing that ever since you have been here, and Mr. Davenport is sorry that he ever consented to let you remain."

"Did he tell you what I have done?"

"There is but one thing he could put his finger upon, and that was when you tried to pick the lock of his desk."

"I never——" began Johnson.

"If you had got into it you wouldn't have made anything by it. The man's papers are safe."

"I know he carries them on his person, and he's got a little revolver handy, bless the luck. There now, I have let the cat out of the bag! There's no one around who can hear what we say, is there? Sit down."

I tell you things were going a great deal further than I meant to have them. I had come out there on purpose to induce Johnson to drop a hint whether or not he was in Clifford Henderson's employ, but I had succeeded almost too well. It looked as though the man was going to take me into his confidence. It was a dangerous piece of business, too, for I knew if I did anything out of the way, I would be the mark for the bullets in one of Johnson's shining revolvers.

"I don't see why I should sit down," I replied.

"Sit down a minute; I want to talk to you. You have had bad luck with your cattle," said the man, as I picked out a comfortable place to seat myself. "You once possessed a large drove, but they were taken away from you at one pop."

"That's so," I said. "If I could find the men who did it, I wouldn't ask the law to take any stock in them. I would take it into my own hands."

"Well, I don't know anything about that," said the man. "I wasn't there, although, to tell you the truth, I have been in at the bouncing of more than one herd of cattle that was all ready to drive to market."

"What got you in this business, anyway?" I asked suddenly.

"What business?"

"Oh, you know as well as I do. A man of your education can make a living a great deal easier than you do."

"Look a-here, young fellow, I did not agree to make a confidant of you in everything. Perhaps I will do that after a while. What I want to get at now is this: Are you

willing to work with me to have this property go where it belongs?"

"Where does it belong?"

"You mentioned the name of the man not two minutes ago—Clifford Henderson."

"Aha! You do know that man, don't you?"

"Yes; and now you know my secret, for I have got a secret as well as the old man," said Johnson; and as he spoke he reached out and pulled his six-shooters within easy handling distance, turning the butt of one up, so that he could catch it at a moment's warning.

Now, I suppose some of my readers will think I was in no danger about that time, but I knew I was. My life hung upon the words I uttered during the next few minutes. If I had refused I would never have known what hurt me. Johnson would have shot me down and then reported to Mr. Davenport that I had insulted him; and as there was no one present to overhear our conversation, that would have been the last of it. Law was not as potent then as it is in Texas in our day, and Johnson's unsupported word would have been

taken, there being no evidence to the contrary. I tell you I was in something of a fix.

"How does it come that Henderson has so much interest in this property?" I enquired.

"Why, Bob is no relative of Davenport's at all. He picked him up in the gold mines,—where his father died and left him,—named him Davenport, and the boy has been brought up to believe that he has an interest in all his stocks and bonds. I wish I had known a little more about that when I came here. I told the old man some funny stories about my being in the gold mines," he added, with a laugh.

"And Henderson doesn't want him to have it. It seems to me that it would be the part of policy for Henderson to come here and live with Mr. Davenport."

"Oh, that wouldn't do at all!" exclaimed the man hastily. "He used to live with him in St. Louis, but they had an awful row when they separated, and he is afraid the old man will go to work to adopt the boy. I tell you he don't want him to do that!"

"It seems very strange that Mr. Davenport hasn't adopted him before this time."

"I lay it to his illness as much as anything. Like all persons who are troubled with an incurable disease, he thinks something will happen to take him off the minute he adopts Bob, and I tell you it's a lucky thing for us. Well, what do you say?"

"I don't propose to go into this thing until I know how much there is to be made out of it," I answered, as if I had half a mind to go into it. "How much are you going to get?"

"I am not going to take my pay in half-starved cattle, I tell you," said Johnson emphatically. "The old man has a few thousand dollars in bonds in some bank or another,—I don't know which one it is,—and when I get that pocket-book in my hands I shall get some of those bonds. I won't let it go without it. He ought to give you as much as he gives me."

"How much are you going to get?" I said again.

"Twenty thousand dollars; and what I want more than anything else is that pocket-book. He has got his will in there, and I must have that before anything is done. Now, if

you can steal that pocket-book and give it to me, I'll see that you are well paid for your trouble. If Henderson gives you five thousand dollars it would go a long way toward straightening up your cattle business."

"Well, I want some time to think about it. It is a pretty dangerous piece of work."

"Take your own time. We shall not go off until next week. You won't say anything to Bob or the old man about it?"

"Never a word," I replied, hoping that he wouldn't ask me to keep still where Tom and Elam were concerned. I couldn't possibly get along without taking them into my confidence, for although it was new business to them, I felt the want of a little good advice.

"Because if you do—if I see you riding off alone with either one of those fellows I shall know what you are up to, and then good-by to all your chance of getting any money."

"You need have no fear," said I, getting upon my feet. "I shall not say a word to either one of them."

I walked slowly toward the ranch, feeling as if I had signed my own death warrant.

There was no bluster about Johnson, he wasn't that sort; but I knew that I not only would lose all chances of getting any money by going off riding with Mr. Davenport or Bob, but I would lose my chance of life. I would be shot down at once the first time I was caught alone, and, with all my practice at revolver drawing,—that is, pulling it at a moment's warning,—I would not stand any show at all. These Texans are a little bit quicker than cats when it comes to drawing anything.

"Of all the impudence and scandalous things that I ever heard of, that 'Rastus Johnson is the beat," I soliloquized as I walked toward the house, wondering what I should do when I got there. "A man comes out to steal a will from another man and pitches upon me, an entire stranger, because I have had ill luck with my cattle. Of course I have no intention of doing anything of the kind, but if something should happen to get this fellow into serious trouble—— By gracious! if this man was lynched he could take me with him."

When I reached the ranch and mounted the steps that led to the porch I found Tom and Elam sitting there alone. Mr. Davenport had talked himself into a state of complete exhaustion and had gone in to take a nap, taking Bob with him as guard. In order to secure the quietness he wanted they had closed the door after them. I felt that now was my only chance. I saw by the look of surprise on Elam's face that Tom had been hurriedly whispering to him what Mr. Davenport had told us.

"Where have you been?" enquired Tom. "We have been waiting half an hour for you."

"Is it a fact that this Johnson has been working for Clifford Henderson?" exclaimed Elam. "If I was in Davenport's place I would drive him off the ranch."

"Sh—! Don't talk so loud," I admonished him. "I've been gone half an hour, and during that time I have heard some things that will astonish you. I have learned that Johnson is in Henderson's employ, and that he wants me to act as his accomplice."

I uttered these words in a whisper, thinking

of the listening ones there might be on the other side of that door, and when I got through I tiptoed first to one end of the porch and then to the other to keep a lookout for Johnson. I was afraid of the "snooping" qualities that the fellow had developed, and if he had suddenly come around the corner of the house and caught me in the act of whispering to my friends I would not have been at all surprised at it. Tom and Elam were both amazed at what I had told them, and looked at one another with a blank expression on their faces.

"Tom, he wants me to steal that pocket-book Mr. Davenport showed us to-day," I continued. "He says the will is in there and he can't do anything without it. He says the property rightfully belongs to Henderson."

"If I were in your place I would go right straight to Mr. Davenport with it," said Tom, speaking in a whisper this time.

"And be shot for your trouble," chimed in Elam, waking up to the emergencies of the case.

"That's the idea, exactly," I went on.

"He would shoot me down as soon as he would look at me, and then report to Mr. Davenport that I had insulted him; then what could anybody do about it? You fellows would have to shoot him, and that would end the matter. I promised I wouldn't say anything to Bob or his father about it, but I had a mental reservation in my mind when it came to you. Now I want to know what I shall do about it."

"Tell us the whole thing, and then perhaps we can pass judgment upon it," whispered Tom. "I don't know that I understand you."

With that I began, and gave the boys a full history of my short interview with Johnson. It didn't take long, for I did not hold a very long conversation with 'Rastus; and when I came to tell how readily he had included me in his plans I saw Elam wink and nod his head in a very peculiar manner. Then I knew that I had hit the nail squarely on the head when I made up my mind what 'Rastus would do to me if things didn't work as he thought they ought to. I tiptoed to the end of the porch

to see if I could discover any signs of him, and then I came back.

"You see he knows that I have had bad luck with my cattle, and he takes it for granted that I am down on everybody who has been fortunate with theirs," I said, in conclusion. "He thinks I want to steal enough to make up for my lost herd."

"The idea is ridiculous," said Tom. "How in the world does he suppose Mr. Davenport had anything to do with your loss?"

"That aint neither here nor there," said Elam. "That feller has stolen more than one herd of cattle, an' I'll bet on it. I shouldn't wonder if he was one of them desperate fellows—what do you call them——"

"Desperadoes," suggested Tom.

"I know he is," said I. "And he is a man of education. He doesn't talk as the Texans do at all, and I told him that a person of his learning could make a living easier than he did."

"What did he say to that?"

"He said he didn't agree to make a confidant of me in everything. He might do it

after a while. He acknowledged that he had been in at the stealing of more than one herd that was all ready to be driven to market. Now, fellows, what shall I do about it?"

This was too much for Tom, who settled back in his chair and looked at Elam. Our backwoods friend arose to the emergency, and I considered his advice as good as any that could be given.

"You can't do nothing about it," he said, after rubbing his chin thoughtfully for a few minutes. "Let him go his way, an' you go yours."

"Yes; and then see what will happen to me if I don't do as he says. Suppose he thinks I have had time to steal that pocket-book? If I don't give it over to him, then what?"

"Tell him that Mr. Davenport keeps a guard over it all the while," said Elam, "an' that you can get no chance. Heavings an' 'arth! I only wish I was in your boots."

"I wish to goodness you were," said I. "What would you do?"

"I'd let him go his way, an' I'd go mine. That's all I should do."

"I guess that's the best I could do under the circumstances," said I, after thinking the matter over. "By the way, I think it is about time you two went out on your ride. I am of the opinion that it will be safer so. Leave me here alone, so that when Johnson comes up—— I do not believe his name is Johnson; do you?"

"'Tain't nary one of his names, that name aint," said Elam emphatically. "His name is Coyote Bill."

"How do you know?" Tom and I managed to ask in concert.

"I aint never seen the man; I aint done nothing but hear about him since I have been here, but I know he is Coyote Bill," replied Elam doggedly. "At any rate that's the way I should act if I was him."

Coyote Bill was emphatically a name for us to be afraid of. We had done little else than listen to the stories of his exploits since we had been in Texas. He didn't do anything very bad, but he would steal a herd of

cattle,—it didn't make much difference how many men there were to guard them,—run them off to a little oasis there was in the Staked Plains, and slaughter them for their hides and tallow; and when the story of the theft had been forgotten, two of his men would carry the proceeds of their hunt to some place and sell them. He never killed men unless they resisted, and then he shot them down without ceremony. Many a time have we sat on the porch after dark when the cowboys were there, listening to the stories about him, and if this man was Coyote Bill he must have been highly amused at some things that were said about him. We were both inclined to doubt the story of his identity. No one had ever seen Coyote Bill, and how could Elam tell what he looked like?

"Elam, you are certainly mistaken," said I; and the more I thought of his story the less credit I put in it. "If you had seen Coyote Bill I should be tempted to believe you; but you know you have never met him."

"And then just think what he has done!"

added Tom. "He comes up here and agrees with Carlos, a man whom he had never seen before, to go in cahoots with him. The idea is ridiculous. And how did Clifford Henderson fall in with him?"

"I don't know anything about that," returned Elam, as if his mind was fully made up. "I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll bet that Carlos dassent call him Coyote Bill to his face!"

"You may safely bet that, for I aint going to do it," said I, looking around the corner of the house. "Here he comes, boys. You had better get on your horses and make tracks away from here."

The boys lost no time in getting off the porch and to their horses, which they had left standing close by with their bridles down, so that they would not stray away. They swung themselves into their saddles with all haste, and I sat down to await the coming of Coyote Bill, if that was his real name, and to think over what I had heard.

CHAPTER IV.

ELAM'S POOR MARKSMANSHIP.

"COYOTE BILL!" I kept repeating to myself. That name had probably been given to him by the Texans on account of his being so sneaking and sly—so sly that none of the men he had robbed had ever been able to see him. What his other name was I didn't know. While I was turning the matter over in my mind Bill came around the corner. I confess he did not look like so dangerous a fellow, and if I had met him on the prairie and been in want, I should have gone to him without any expectation of being refused. He looked surprised to see me sitting there alone.

"Where are they?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Whom do you mean?" I enquired, being determined, if I could, to answer no questions except those he had on his mind. How did I know whom he referred to when he spoke of

"they," and wanted to know where they were?

"I mean the old man and Bob, and all the rest of them," he added. "I thought they were here with you."

"Tom and Elam have gone off riding,—there they go,—and Mr. Davenport and Bob have gone into the ranch to have a nap. I can't steal the pocket-book now, even if I wanted to, for Bob is keeping guard over it. It is true he don't know what there is in it, but he is keeping watch of his father all the same."

"Look here, Carlos," said Bill, coming up close to the porch, "do you ever have charge of the old man in that way?"

"In what way?"

"Well, I haven't been able to do any business in almost a year, and I am getting heartily tired of it."

"What business do you mean?"

"Aw! Go on, now. You know what I mean. I can't steal cattle that are half starved, for I wouldn't make anything out of them if I did. I am getting impatient, and my boss is getting impatient, too."

"Well?" said I, when he paused.

"I want you to see if you can't secure possession of that pocket-book by to-morrow night," said Bill, in a quiet way that had a volume of meaning in it. "You see, it isn't the will that Henderson cares for. The cattle are pretty well gone up, and there won't be a third of them left when we get to Trinity. What he cares most about is the bonds. If he can get them in his hands he will be all right."

"Why, Coyote Bill——" I began.

I stopped suddenly, with a long-drawn gasp, for I had done the very thing I was willing to bet Elam I would not do. Bill started and looked at me closely, and one hand moved to the butt of his revolver. My heart was in my mouth. Coyote Bill's face was a study, and I was sure my slip of the tongue had hit him in a vital spot. Understand me, I didn't speak his name knowing what I was doing, but because I couldn't help myself. The idea that I was to steal that pocket-book at twenty-four hours' notice was more than I could stand, and I blurted out the first words that came into my mind. I never had had much

practice in studying out the different emotions that flit across a person's mind, but I was sure that in Coyote Bill's expression both rage and mirth struggled for the mastery—rage, that I had suddenly found out his name since I had left him; and mirth, because I, an unarmed boy, should stand there and call him something which he didn't like too well anyway. So I resolved to put a bold face on the matter.

"See here, Bill——" was the way I began the conversation.

"Who told you that was my name?" he asked.

"Why, Bill, I have done nothing but hear about you and your doings since I have been here," I answered. "You certainly do not pretend to say you are not what I represented you to be?"

"Well, that's neither here nor there," said he, taking his hand away from his pistol. "You are a brave lad; I will say that much for you, and you ought to be one of us. What's the reason you can't steal the pocket-book by to-morrow night?"

I drew a long breath of relief. The worst of the danger was passed, but the recollection of what might be done to me after a while made me shudder. I had half a mind to slip away that very night, but I knew that Elam would scorn such a proposition. He meant to stay and see the thing out. I tell you I wished he stood in my boots, more than once.

"Because Bob is keeping guard over it," I said. "He don't know what there is in it, I tell you; but he has been made to understand that there is something in it that concerns himself, and so he is keeping an eye on it."

"Does he know that he is in danger of losing it?"

"Yes, he does; but he don't know where the trouble is coming from."

"Well, you have got hold of my name, and I wish you hadn't done it," said Bill, looking down at the ground and kicking a chip away with his foot. "Be careful that you don't use it where anybody else can hear it. Perhaps I can find some other way to get it. Do you sleep very sound?"

I don't know what reply I made to this ques-

tion, for it showed me that Bill was about to attempt something after we had retired to rest. I made up my mind that he would try it too, but whether or not he would succeed in getting by Elam was a different story altogether. I made it up on the spur of the moment to take Elam into my confidence. He was a fellow who could remain awake for three or four nights, and in the morning he would be as fresh and rosy as though he had enjoyed a good night's sleep.

"You want to sleep pretty soundly to-night, whatever you may do on other occasions," said Bill, in a very decided manner. "I shan't be here in the morning."

He went off, whistling softly to himself, and I went back to my chair and sat down. They told us, when we first talked of going to Texas, that we would find things very different there, and indeed I had found them so. In Denver, if a man had betrayed himself in the same careless manner that Coyote Bill had done, he would have been shot on sight; but here were three boys who knew what Bill had done, some of whom had the reputation of

being quick to shoot, and they were afraid to do a thing. It was the man's fame as a quick shot that stood him well in hand. When I came to think of it, I was disgusted with myself and everybody else. If anyone had told me that I would turn out to be such a coward I would have been very indignant at him.

The hot day wore away, and presently I saw Tom and Elam coming back. They could not stay away when they knew that something was going on behind their backs. Mr. Davenport and Bob came out; the cook began to bestir himself, the dishes rattled in the kitchen, and in a little while they told us that supper was ready. Of course we had to be as neat here as we had anywhere else, and Elam and I found ourselves at the wash-basin. There was no one in sight.

"Elam," said I, in an excited whisper, "whatever you do, you mustn't go to sleep to-night!"

"Sho!" answered Elam. "What's going on to-night?"

"Coyote Bill has made up his mind to steal that pocket-book. He says that the bonds

are all he wants out of it. He means some mining stocks, I suppose."

"Well," exclaimed Elam, burying his face in the towel, "how is he goin' to work to get it?"

"He intends to come in after we are all asleep and feel under the pillows for it. He asked me if I slept rather soundly at night, and I don't know what answer I made him; but I thought of you and concluded you could keep awake. I have found out, too, that his name is Coyote Bill, just as you said it was."

"What did I tell you?" said Elam, delighted to know that he had found out something about the man. "I knowed that was the way I would act if I was him. What did he say when you told him?"

"He told me I was a brave boy and ought to be one of 'us,' as he explained it. Does he mean that I ought to belong to his gang and help him steal cattle?"

"Sure! You couldn't be one of him and help do anything else, could you? How do you reckon he is going to come in?"

"I don't know. You will have to keep wide awake and find out."

"I'll bet you I don't sleep a wink to-night. If he thinks he can get away with that pocket-book let him try it; that's all."

"But I don't see why he should pick me out as a brave boy and want me to join his gang."

"Well, Carlos, I will say this fur you," said Elam, putting the towel back on its nail and rolling down his sleeves: "You have a most innercent way of talkin' when you get into danger, an' a man don't think you know that there is danger in it."

"Nonsense! I have been afraid that Bill would shoot at any minute. I am really afraid of him."

"Old Bill doesn't know it, an' that's what makes him so reckless. I will go further an' say you have a sassy way of talkin'. Now, you finish washin' an' I'll go in an' set down. Remember, I shan't go to sleep at all to-night."

I was perfectly satisfied with the assurance. You see it would not do for me to lie awake

and halt Bill when he came in for fear that he would accuse me of treachery; but with Elam, who wasn't supposed to know anything about the case, it would be different. I didn't think that Elam's explanation amounted to anything at all. In fact, I did not see how I could have talked in any other way. If I had become excited and reported the matter to Mr. Davenport there would have been hot work there in the cabin, for I didn't suppose that any of my companions would have let Coyote Bill work his own sweet will on me. Having finished washing I went into the cabin and sat down. Bill was there, and he was devoting himself to the eatables before him like any other gentleman. I was astonished at the man's nerve.

Supper over, we went out on the porch, lighted our pipes, and devoted two hours to talking. The most of the conversation referred to the time when the cattle would be along and we should get ready to march to Trinity. Everybody suspected that there was going to be a fight up there before our cattle would be allowed water, and we were a little

anxious as to how it would come out. We expected to fight the sheriff and his posse and all the Texas Rangers that could be summoned against us; and we knew that these men were just as determined as we were. They were fighting for the crops upon which they had expended so much labor, and it wasn't likely that they were men who would give way on our demand.

"Let them take a look at our cattle," said Bob. "That will stop them. The man has yet to be born who can resist the sight of their terrible sufferings."

"Those men up there would look on without any twinges of conscience if they saw the last one of our herds drop and die before their eyes," returned his father. "Here's where we expect to catch them on the fly: We shall be a mile or so behind our cattle, which will be spread out over an immense amount of prairie, and when those cattle get a sniff of the fresh water, fences won't stop them. It is the momentum of our cattle that will take them ahead."

I certainly hoped that such would be the

case, for I knew there would be some men stationed along the banks of that stream who were pretty sure shots with the rifle. I didn't care to make myself a target for one of them.

The conversation began to lag after a while, and finally one of the cowboys remarked that sleep had pretty near corralled him and he reckoned he would go in and go to bed; and so they all dropped off, Elam giving my arm a severe pinch as he went by. There was one thing about this arrangement that I did not like. Bill always made his bunk under the trees in the yard. He preferred to have it so. He had been accustomed to sleeping out of doors in the mines, and he was always made uneasy when he awoke and found himself in the house, for fear that he would suffocate. When it rained he would gladly come into the ranch and stay there for a week, if it stormed so long. He gathered up the blankets and the saddle which Mr. Davenport had loaned him for a bed, bade us all a cheerful good-night, and went out to his bunk. There were three of us who knew better than that. His object in sleeping out of doors was, in case

some of the men he had robbed found out where he hung out, that he might have a much better chance for escape.

"He's a cool one," I thought, as I went in, pulled off my outer clothes, and laid down on my bunk. "I'll see how he will feel in the morning."

I composed myself to sleep as I always did, and lay with my eyes fastened on the door; for I knew that there was where that rascal Bill would come in. Both the doors were open, and Elam wouldn't have the creaking of hinges to arouse him. I laid there until nearly midnight, and had not the least desire to sleep, and all the while I was treated to a concert that anyone who has slumbered in a room with half a dozen men can readily imagine. Such a chorus of snores I never heard before, and what surprised me more than anything else was, the loudest of them seemed to come from Elam's bunk. Was my friend fairly asleep? I sometimes thought he was, and was on the point of awakening him when I heard a faint noise at the rear door—not the front one, on which my gaze was fast-

ened. My heart beat like a trip-hammer. Slowly, and without the least noise, I turned my head to look in that direction, but could see nothing. All was still for a few seconds, and then the sound was repeated. It was a noise something like that made by dragging a heavy body over the floor; then I looked down and could distinctly see a human head. Bill had not come in erect as I thought he was going to, but had crawled in on his hands and knees, intending, if he were heard, to lie down and so escape detection. Slowly he crawled along until he came abreast of Elam's bunk and not more than six feet from it, and then there was a commotion in that bunk and Elam's voice called out:

"Who's that a-comin' there? Speak quick!"

An instant later, and before Bill had time to reply the crack of a revolver awoke the echoes of the cabin, and a short but desperate struggle took place in Elam's direction. Then the pistol cracked again, and in an instant afterward the intruder was gone. It was all done so quickly that, although I had

my hand on my revolver under my pillow, I did not have time to fire a shot.

"Elam!" I cried; "what's the matter?"

"Well, sir, that's the quickest man I ever saw," stammered Elam. "I had two pulls at him, but he knocked my arm out of the way and got safe off."

"Did you hit him?" I asked, knowing how impossible it was for him to miss at that distance.

"No, I didn't. He hasn't had time to get fur away, an' I say let's go after him. I wish he would give me another chance at him at that distance. I'd hit him sure."

By this time the whole cabin was in an uproar. All started up with pistols in their hands, and all demanded of Elam an explanation. He gave it in a few words, adding:

"I knew mighty well that the fellow didn't come in here fur no good. That's the way I should have done if I had been him. He's out there now, an' I say let's go after him."

"The villain was after my pocket-book," said Mr. Davenport, in evident excitement. "He wouldn't have got more than five or ten

dollars, for that is all there is in it. Lem, I want you and Frank to listen to me," he added, seizing the nearest cowboy by the arm. "I have been keeping 'Rastus Johnson here until I could find out——"

"'Rastus Johnson! That aint ary one of his names," shouted Elam. "His name is Coyote Bill!"

That was all the cowboys wanted to hear. In the meantime we had thrown off the blankets, and jumping to our feet followed the cowboys out of the ranch—all except Mr. Davenport, who, knowing that the night air wasn't good for him, stayed behind to keep guard over his pocket-book. I followed the cowboys directly to the place of Bill's bunk, but when we got there it was empty. He and his six-shooters were gone. I tell you I breathed a good deal easier after that.

"Coyote Bill!" said Frank, leaning one hand against the tree under which the fugitive had made his bunk. "I wondered what that fellow's object was in coming here and passing himself off for 'Rastus Johnson, and now I know. Cattle is getting so that it doesn't

pay to steal them, and he was here to get the old man's pocket-book."

"And how does it come that Elam knows so much about him?" asked Lem. "You are a stranger in these parts, Elam."

"I know I am; but that's just the way I should have acted if I was him," returned Elam, who began to see that he had made a mistake in claiming to know the man. "I said his name was Coyote Bill, an' I struck centre when I did it."

"Mr. Davenport gave us the secret history of that pocket-book, and wanted Tom and me to swear to what he told us," I interposed, fearing that things were going a trifle too far. "That man tried to hire me to steal that pocket-book to-night, and that was the way Elam came to get a shot at him."

"I didn't get nary a shot at him," exclaimed Elam. "I pulled onto him an' he struck up my arm."

"Let us go in and talk to Mr. Davenport about it," said I, seeing that all I said was Greek to the cowboys. "He will tell you as much of the story as I can."

"Did you know anything about this, Bob?" asked Frank.

"Not a word. I am as surprised as you are to hear it," said Bob.

"Coyote Bill!" said Lem, gazing into the woods as if he had half a mind to go in pursuit of the man. "What reason have you for calling him that?"

"Because that's the way I should have acted if I was him," answered Elam.

"It wouldn't pay to go after him," said Frank. "He has laid down behind a tree and can see everything we do. Let's go in and talk to the old man about it."

All this conversation was crowded into a very short space of time. We hadn't been out there two minutes before we decided that it would be a waste of time to pursue the outlaw, and that we had better go in and see what Mr. Davenport had to say about it, and I for one was very glad to get away from his bunk. Of course Bill was in ambush out there, and how did I know but that he had a bead drawn on me at that very moment? We followed the cowboys into the house, and we found

Mr. Davenport sitting up on the edge of his bed.

"You didn't get him; I can see that very plainly," said he, as we entered. "I wish I had never heard of him in the first place."

"You have given us a history of that pocket-book, sir," said I, beginning my business at once, "and I beg that you will repeat it for the benefit of the cowboys. Frank and Lem haven't said much, but I believe from their silence that they would like to know something about it."

"Elam, how did you find out that his name was Coyote Bill?" enquired Mr. Davenport. "That name has been bothering me more than a little since you went out."

"Perhaps you will allow me to explain that," said I. "When I told Elam the history of that pocket-book, which I did as soon as you and Bob had gone into the ranch to have a nap, he jumped at the conclusion. He said there wasn't another man in this part of the country who would have the cheek to act that way."

"Have I got to go all over that thing

again?" groaned Mr. Davenport. "Bob, my first word is to you. I shall have that off my mind, anyway. You are not my son."

It was dark in the cabin, but I could tell by the tones of his voice how great an effort it was for him to say it. Then he went on and told the story very much as he had told it to me, and when he got through I did not hear anything but the muttered swear words which the cowboys exchanged with each other. It was their way of expressing utter astonishment.

CHAPTER V.

THE WEST FORK OF TRINITY.

WHILE Mr. Davenport was speaking I noticed that Bob got up and settled down close by his father as he sat on the bunk, and placed his left arm around his neck. He meant to assure him that any revelations he would make would cause no difference with him. The man was his father, the only father he had ever known, and as such he intended to acknowledge him. I could see that Mr. Davenport was greatly encouraged by this.

"There is only one thing that I blame you for," said Lem. "You ought to have taken Frank and me into your confidence at once."

"I tell you we would have made short work with him," added Frank. "The idea that this Coyote Bill could come around here and bum around as he has! It's scandalous!"

"I didn't know that his name was Coyote

Bill until Elam spoke it out," returned Mr. Davenport. "Where he got it, I don't know."

"Then, Elam, we'll have to take you to task for that."

"I didn't know it until just as we were washing for supper," explained Elam, "an' then Carlos told me."

"What have you to say to that, Carlos?"

"I didn't know it myself until Bill proposed that I should steal that pocket-book before to-morrow night," said I; and somehow I couldn't help feeling uneasy by the determined way the two cowboys plied their questions. "He surprised me so suddenly that I spoke the first words that came into my mind. I knew then that he was going to make an attempt to steal it after we had gone to bed, and so I told Elam that he would have to keep awake and stop it. That was the reason that Elam got those two shots at him."

"Well, it is a mighty funny thing how a man of that reputation could come here and pass himself off for an honest miner!" said Lem.

"If you had the cheek that man's got you could do anything," I continued. "He said I ought to be one of them. If he means by that, that I ought to join one of his bands and make my living by stealing cattle, he's a long ways out of his reach."

"You will find the boys all right, because I have confided in them," said Mr. Davenport. "And now I have confided in you. Don't tell what I have told you, please, and as soon as I get to Trinity I will ride down to Austin and have this affair settled up. I did not suppose that man would trouble me away out here in Texas."

"Father," said Bob, who had listened in speechless wonderment to all the trouble he had caused, "you ought to have left me in the mines. You have had lots of bother on account of me."

"My dear boy, you have not been the least particle of bother," said Mr. Davenport hastily. "Now you know why it was that I didn't want you to go fishing or hunting without me. I was afraid Henderson might do you some damage."

"Did he want to kill me?"

"No, indeed! I was afraid he might abduct you. You haven't seen him since you were seven years old, and if he could have abducted you then, and got you away where you could have signed the papers——"

"Why, father, my signature as a minor wouldn't have amounted to anything!" said Bob.

"No; but he could have kept you until you were twenty-one, and then your signature would have amounted to something, I guess. But I will talk to you more about this in the morning. I have talked so much that I am fagged out. You are sure you don't think any the less of me for what I have done?"

"Indeed, I do not!" said Bob, gently assisting the invalid back upon his bed. "If all the money you have should go to Henderson, I should always think of you as I do now."

"Well, I should think a great deal less of myself," replied Mr. Davenport emphatically. "Bob, you will get it all. I could not rest easy in my grave if I knew you were to be

cheated out of it. You five boys will bear testimony to what I say? Thank you! Now, Bob, cover me up from the night air. Good-night!"

Mr. Davenport sank back on his pillows and soon breathed the sleep of exhaustion, while the rest of us, who couldn't bear to think of lying down, went out upon the porch. Of course I was glad to see that the cowboys had got over their suspicions of Elam and me, and one would have thought from some expressions they used that such a thing had never been heard of, even in Texas. We lighted our pipes and sat down to smoke on it, hoping that the thing would come clearer to us under the influence of the weed. The only thing the cowboys blamed Mr. Davenport for was that he did not expose Coyote Bill when he found out what his intentions were. And how had Bill happened to get acquainted with Henderson? That was one thing that they could not understand.

"This thing isn't settled yet, by a long ways," said Frank, who, having emptied one

pipe, filled up for a fresh smoke. "Just the minute anything happens to the old man, that fellow Henderson will come on here and lay claim to that pocket-book. But Bob will already have it safe in his good clothes. I want to see the man that says it is his."

"So do I," said Lem. "He won't say it a second time, I bet you!"

"Father spoke about his keeping me until I was twenty-one, and then my signature would amount to something," said Bob, when the conversation lagged a little. "What would Henderson do? I guess I'd know more then than I do now."

"That would make no difference," said Frank. "He could keep you on bread and water until you would be glad to sign anything."

"Would he shut me up?" exclaimed Bob, looking at me.

"He might put you into a lunatic asylum," I answered.

"Great Scott! And all the time I would be as sane as he is!"

"That would make no difference, either,"

said Frank. "There are plenty of men who run an insane asylum who would be glad to take a patient on such terms as he could offer. Ten or fifteen thousand dollars at the end of six years would make him open his eyes. Before you had been with him a week you would see all sorts of things."

"Well, this beats me!" gasped Bob. "And I just as sane as anybody! Such things aint right."

"I know they are not right," said Lem. "There are plenty of things that happen in this world that you know nothing about, and money will do a heap of things."

"But Henderson has no ten thousand dollars to give such a man."

"No, but he would soon get it. I tell you your father has done right in watching you."

We all smoked two or three pipes of tobacco and then Lem said he was getting sleepy, whereupon we all followed him into the ranch and went to bed. I don't suppose that Bob slumbered a wink that night, but I slept as soundly as though such men as Coyote Bill had not been within a hundred

miles of us; and yet he came back that same night and stole the rest of his bedding. A little further examination showed us that Mr. Davenport's favorite riding horse was also missing, and then we knew that if we ever caught him again salt would not save him. The man had been guilty of stealing horses, and that was enough to hang him. When I had made these observations I went back to tell them to Mr. Davenport.

"Of course the man is plucky," said he, "and it is going to get him into serious trouble some day. Now, I want you boys to come here and sign as witnesses to my signature. I take my solemn oath that I wrote this myself," he added, placing his forefinger upon his sign manual, "and that everything in this will is just what I want it to be. Now, boys, place your own signatures there. Now, Bob, you sign right there as witness to their signatures. There, I guess it is all right. If anything happens to me, get this pocket-book into your hands as soon as possible."

There was one thing that occurred to me

right there, although I did not say anything about it. Mr. Davenport seemed to be thoroughly convinced that something was going to happen to him during his ride to Trinity, and since he knew it, why didn't he give his pocket-book up to someone else? That, it seemed to me, would be the surest way, for everybody who knew anything about the matter would know right where the will ought to be found in case anything "happened" to the invalid. I thought the matter over while I was getting ready for breakfast, and concluded that Bob or somebody else would certainly see some misfortune on account of that pocket-book. It stuck close to me, and somehow I couldn't get rid of it.

I pass over the next few days, during which nothing transpired that is worthy of notice. We did nothing but talk about Coyote Bill, and wondered where he had gone now and where we should be likely to meet him again, for there were none of us who didn't expect to see him once more. He wasn't the man to give up twenty thousand dollars because one attempt to secure it had failed. And then

what would he say to me? I had been guilty of treachery to him, and that was a fact.

On the morning of the fourth day, after we had packed our wagon with water and provisions, and got all ready for the start, the cattle from the lower counties made their appearance. I tell you I never saw so many head of stock before in my life. They covered the hills to the right and left as far as the eye could reach, and as to how deep they were I don't know. If a man had all those cattle in good trim, he would have nothing to do but sit in his rocking-chair and sell them. I wondered how many of them would live to reach Trinity. Not one in ten, I was satisfied. They flocked into our water-holes, and in five minutes there wasn't water enough left to wet your tongue with. The strongest fences that could have been made would not have delayed them a minute. Presently the leader of the movement appeared in sight, and came up to the porch on which we were sitting. His name was Chisholm, and he seemed the very personification of good nature. He looked at us boys

because he hadn't seen us before, and greeted us in his hearty Western fashion.

"How-dy!" said he. "Are you all ready to start? I hope you've got a little mite of water laid by for us, for we haven't had a drink in so long that we don't know how it tastes."

"Oh, yes! we've got a drink for you," said Mr. Davenport. "Go into that building right there and you will find two barrels. Fill up your keg with them."

"By George! you are the right sort," said Mr. Chisholm. "I was afraid some of our beeves would drink it all up before we got here and not give us any."

"Have you lost many cattle coming here?" asked Mr. Davenport.

"Well, sir, the road is just lined with them," answered Mr. Chisholm, getting off his horse and slipping his bridle over its head. "If you follow the dead beeves, you can go straight to my ranch. Nobody ever heard of such weather as this before. It doesn't look like rain in this part of the country."

"No, indeed," said Mr. Davenport. "It has been dry and hazy every day as long as I can remember. Do you think we will get up to Trinity with any beeves?"

"Oh, we've got to. It is our only show."

"Do you think we shall have a fight up there?" asked Bob.

"Certain! What would you do if you were in their place? They think they are in the right, and we know we are, and the first one of our cattle that goes down to the water in Trinity will be tumbled over. I am afraid that they will outnumber us. The Rangers and the farmers and the police—I don't know. But our cattle must have water and grass; we won't take 'no' for an answer."

"Do you know 'Rastus Johnson?" said Mr. Davenport suddenly.

"Yes, I know him," said Mr. Chisholm, looking around. "What of him?"

"He stole my favorite riding horse this week."

"Aha! That wasn't all he did either," said Mr. Chisholm, looking hard at the invalid.

"No, it wasn't," replied Mr. Davenport,

who took out the pocket-book, told what was in it, and of the attempt that had been made to steal it a few nights before. When he mentioned the name of Coyote Bill Mr. Chisholm almost jumped from his chair, and so did the men who had been driving the wagon. They had obeyed orders and filled up their empty barrel, took a good drink themselves, and brought along a cupful for their leader. Then they sat down and waited until Mr. Chisholm got ready to start, and listened to the story.

"Coyote Bill!" said Mr. Chisholm, in dismay. "I have wanted to find that fellow for more'n a year, and here I've run up against him two or three times during the last six months. It is a pity that boy didn't shoot him. What were you thinking of?" he added, turning fiercely upon Elam. "Didn't you know that it would put five thousand dollars in your pocket?"

"No, I never heared of that," replied Elam, somewhat startled to find out that he had had a pull on a man worth that sum of money.

"Well, the stock-raisers down in our county would give that much for him any day. You had a chance to make yourself rich and then went and threw it away. Dog-gone such a shot!"

"Look here, friend," said Elam, straightening up in his chair and fastening his eyes upon Mr. Chisholm, "I didn't shoot him because I couldn't; that's why. What would you 'a' done if a man had jumped on you while you were flat in bed an' seized the pistol, an' turned it t'other way? I done my best."

"Well, maybe you did, but it sounds kinder funny to me. I wish he would give me such a shot as that. Where do you think he is now?"

"I do not know," answered Mr. Davenport. "He has gone off with that horse, and he certainly won't stop until he gets among friends. I am willing to trust Elam with my life. There are not many of you can shoot as he can."

This went a long way toward cooling the hot temper of Elam, although I noticed that

during the first part of the time we were in the drive he kept one eye fastened upon Mr. Chisholm the whole time. He didn't like the imputation that had been cast upon his prowess. If the leader had been in Elam's place, and had Coyote Bill's grasp on his throat and wrist, he might have been led to believe that the desperado had plenty of strength as well as pluck.

Mr. Chisholm and his men slept at the ranch that night, and bright and early the next morning we were on the move. We packed up in something of a hurry when we got fairly ready to go, and I speak of it here so that you may have no difficulty in understanding what happened afterward. Not a single one of the herd was in sight. We followed along the ground they had passed over, and it was as bare as your hand. Not a blade of grass was to be seen. If it had not been for the grain we had provided for our horses in the wagons, they would have fared badly, indeed, and then they didn't like the grain any too well. It was only when they were about half starved that they would touch it.

I never knew what starving cattle were before, for although I had been a week at the ranch, I had never been out to see what was going on. The nearest herd was probably half a day's journey distant. I stayed in the ranch with Mr. Davenport almost all the time. I had not seen the walking skeletons which were now shambling before us, but now I saw them all too plainly. Every once in a little while we would come across some stricken animal who had laid down, and was waiting for death to come. And it was so all along our route. Whichever way you turned your eyes you were sure to see some dead cattle.

"I'll just tell you what's a fact, Mr. Davenport," said I, after counting thirteen dead animals, who could not go any further. "If we keep on losing cattle at this rate we'll have to go at something else when we get up to Trinity. There will be no need for the Rangers and farmers to gather up there, for we shan't have many animals to shoot."

"It looks that way to me, I confess," said the man, looking down at the horn of his saddle. "But you know what Mr. Chis-

holm said. We must go on; it's our only show."

For three weeks we were in the drive (the journey could have been made in one week if the cattle had been in trim), seeing nothing new—nothing but dead animals and a prairie that looked as hard as the road. During all this time there was a little party of us that were kept in a state of suspense, and it was all the more painful to us because we could not say anything about it. Mr. Davenport was failing rapidly; anybody could see that, and now and then some cowboy looked pityingly at Bob. And Bob knew it all the while, and took pains to keep it from his father, and from us, too. He would joke and laugh with him all day, and when night came would roll over and cry himself to sleep. No son ever tried harder to make a parent's last days happy.

"I tell you I'd like to see that Clifford Henderson about now," said Tom Mason. "That boy has cried himself to sleep again. Bob hasn't got anything here anyway, and I'd like to see somebody come up and take away

his last cent from him. He shouldn't get away with it."

Things went on in this way until the wooded shores of Trinity were in plain sight, and that brown-whiskered farmer came out in company with a deputy sheriff to hold a consultation with Mr. Chisholm—"the boss," he called him. You all know what that "consultation" amounted to. It was defiance on one side and threats to have our cattle shot on the other. That brown-whiskered man must have been crazy, if he thought that our small force of sixty men could turn those beeves back when they had got "a sniff of that water" that was flashing along on the other side of the willows, for they were already bearing down upon it with the irresistible power of an avalanche. All the cowboys in the State could not have turned them from their purpose. I looked at Mr. Davenport to see what he thought about it.

"Well, boys, this begins to look like war," said he, with an attempt at a smile. He was very pale, but he clutched his rifle with the hand of one who had made up his mind to die

right there. "Two hundred against sixty is big odds, but we must face the music. Our cattle must have water, or we shall lose more than half we've got left before morning. Go and water your horses, and then come back and see if you can't arouse some of these beeves. If you can only induce them to go ahead a mile further they will have water enough."

"You will remain close by the wagon?" enquired Bob.

"I will stay right here," returned his father. "When you want me come right back to the wagon."

The events of the next quarter of an hour proved one of two things: either that the farmers, when they saw the immense herd approaching their ambush, realized how utterly impossible it was to stop them, and that the attempt to do so would only result in a useless waste of life, or else that the sheriff, acting upon Mr. Chisholm's advice, had prevailed upon them to fall back and give the famishing cattle a chance at the water. At any rate, to Bob's great relief, the shot for

which he was waiting and listening was not fired, and the cattle dashed through the willows and almost buried themselves in the stream. When Bob and his friends reached the bank,—and they were obliged to ride at least a mile up the bayou before they could find a place to water their horses,—the stream being literally filled with the thirsty beeves, —they saw the farmers gathered in a body five hundred yards away, and Mr. Chisholm and some of the other wealthy cattle-owners were talking to them.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. DAVENPORT'S POCKET-BOOK.

"IT is too late for them to begin a fight now," said Bob, with a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction. "Here's water enough in abundance and grass enough to last the stock for a day or two; but where shall we go and what shall we do after that? Who are those over there? More farmers, I suppose, for if they were cattlemen they would not come from that direction."

As Bob said this he directed our attention to a long line of horsemen, who, moving in a compact body, were rapidly approaching the place on which the farmers stood. They moved four abreast and didn't scatter out enough from the ranks to be farmers, and therefore I knew them to be something else.

"They are soldiers," I said.

"Texas Rangers!" exclaimed Bob. "I am glad to see them, for they won't let us fight,

anyway. Their object is to preserve order on the frontier, and they will arrest anybody who doesn't obey them. Let's wait a few minutes and see what they are going to do."

We waited, and in a short time saw that the farmers were not as glad to see them as we were. The column halted and the three officers in command rode up to see what the trouble was about, and in two minutes were surrounded by a wall of clenched fists, which were flourished in the air. The farmers seemed bent on telling their story before the cattlemen could get in a word, but presently we heard a loud voice commanding silence, and after that everything became as quiet as could be. One man had been called upon to tell what he knew, and the others consented to wait until he got through.

"I guess there won't be any fighting as long as the Rangers are here, and so we will go back and see to the cattle," said I. "We're going to have a hard time in getting them over the hill, so that they can see the water, but if we can do that for even one it will be just so much money saved."

If anybody has tried to get cattle up when once they have laid down and abandoned themselves to their fate, he will know what a time we had of it. Whips didn't do any good. The only thing we could do was to use our lariats upon them and fairly drag them to their feet. In this way, by taking two boys to each cow, we managed to get half a dozen of them to the top of the hill, where they could see their companions, and by that time it was pitch dark. We didn't know whose cows they were, and that made no difference. We saw several other men engaged as we were, and when the last squad of them came along we joined them and rode toward the wagon.

"Let the balance go," said one of the cowboys. "If the cool night air of the prairie don't revive them nothing else will. I believe I would like to have a drink of water myself."

"We got along without a fight, didn't we?" said Bob, who seemed to know everybody on the plains.

"Of course; but it looked pretty blue for a while, I tell you. The farmers can't begin a

fight now, anyway. They ought to have pitched into us the moment we came in sight."

"Does anybody know where our wagon is?" I enquired.

Nobody did. They were on the hunt for their own wagons themselves, and the only thing they could do was to keep on going until they found them. That seemed to be the only thing for us to do, too, so we rode down to the willows, and every time we saw a team we sent one of our number in to make enquiries. When it came my turn I went in and found only two men, who were engaged in getting their supper.

"That's Mr. Davenport's wagon up there in the bend," said one, pointing up the river. "Do you belong?"

I replied that I did belong there, and that I was somewhat anxious to find it, for I was in need of something to eat.

"I hope you aint any relative of the man who owns it," said the cowboy. "If you are you will find him as dead as a smoked herring."

These words were all I wanted to hear. A queer pang shot over me when I thought of Bob. How was I to break the news to him?

"Why, how did anybody find it out?" I managed to say at last.

"Oh, he's there! They found him breathing his last on the plains, and brought him in. Say, do you know what hold Chisholm has got on him? He has got a guard over him, and won't let nobody go nigh him."

"It 'pears to me that he's got some documents on him that he does not want to give up," said the other cowboy. "If you belong there, why, of course, you will know all about it."

I never had anything come quite so hard as I did in riding back through those willows to the place where Bob sat on his horse, for I didn't know how in the world I could tell him of his father's death; but when I got within sight of him I found that Mr. Chisholm was ahead of me. When he found that Bob didn't come in with the rest of the cowboys he had come out to find him, believing that he could tell him better than anybody else. I

saw that he had been very easy about it, but it was all Bob could do to stand it. Elam Storm was his friend. He did not go to anyone else, but rose up close to him and threw both his arms around his neck.

"Oh, Elam! you're the only friend I've got now," said Bob, striving hard to keep back his sobs.

Elam stammered and coughed, and looked all around for help. Finally he glanced appealingly at me, but what could I say?

"He was brung in about half an hour ago," said Mr. Chisholm, drawing his hand hastily across his face. "And although we have had two doctors at him, whom we found among the Rangers, they say it is too late to do anything. They say it is something like heart disease."

"Was no one near him when he was taken?" I asked, feeling that I must say something.

"There were a dozen men near him," was the answer. "They got to him as quickly as they could, but couldn't be of any use. And I'll tell you that he had his left hand tightly clasped on his pocket-book," said Mr. Chis-

holm, riding up closer to me and speaking in a whisper. "So that is safe."

I breathed easier after that, and fell in beside Mr. Chisholm, who led the way slowly toward the wagon. We found it completely surrounded by men—Rangers, farmers, and cowboys—who had come in to see about it; for it was seldom that a loss like this happened during a drive. But they paid no attention to us. Their gaze was fixed upon a man who had attempted to go into the wagon, but the guard had stopped him. We worked our way gradually through the crowd, and Bob, who gave little heed to what was going on around him, threw himself from his horse, and made his way into the wagon.

"Elam," said he, "you must go with me. I feel safer when you are around."

The guard, prompted by a sign from Mr. Chisholm, allowed him to pass, and nobody made any effort to stop him, but the man who was talking with the guard was well-nigh furious.

"Who's that who allows a stranger to go in to my brother?" said he, turning fiercely

upon Mr. Chisholm. "I guess I have got more right in there than he has."

"Who be you?" asked Mr. Chisholm.

"I am Clifford Henderson, if it will do you any good to know it," answered the man. "I haven't seen my brother for eight years, and I claim the right to go in to him."

"That's nothing more than fair, Aleck," said one of the cowboys. "He has as good a right to see him as anybody."

So that was Clifford Henderson, was it? Mr. Chisholm turned and gave him a good looking over, and Tom Mason and I did the same; and I was forced to make the confession that, as far as resemblance went, Bob was a long way off. Henderson was the very picture of the dead and gone Mr. Davenport. He was a man of rather large size, dressed like the Texans that stood around him; and, if he had allowed his whiskers to grow into a goatee, instead of that flowing beard, he could easily have passed himself off for his brother. I am free to say that I didn't know enough about law to know which way the property would turn, but then what did these men care about

law? Bob's father's signature, backed up by the names of all of us, and witnessed by Bob himself, would bring him the legal right to everything he owned. But there was one thing against Henderson: He got mad when he was told that he could not see his brother. Mr. Chisholm evidently noticed this and resolved to profit by it.

"Well, sir, you are as like your brother as two peas," said Mr. Chisholm, at length.

"I know I am," said Henderson, taking off his hat and turning around so that everybody could see him. "I haven't seen him in a long time, and I demand the right to see him now."

"All right! You shall have it," said Mr. Chisholm, and riding up close to the wagon he called out: "Bob, have you got that pocket-book?"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Henderson. "That pocket-book is just what I want. There are some papers in it that relate to me."

"Hand it out here," said Mr. Chisholm, as Elam answered in the affirmative from the wagon; and when his hands closed upon the

pocket-book, he put it into his inside coat. "Now you can see your brother as soon as you please."

"But I want that thing you put inside of your coat," said Mr. Henderson, and I didn't blame him for showing anger. "All my future depends on what you have there."

"We'll have some supper first; after that you can all come here and we'll listen to the different tales this book has got to tell."

"Different tales?" ejaculated Henderson. "There's only one tale it can tell, and that is, that all his property belongs to me. Who is that stranger whom you allowed to go inside the wagon? I want him out of there when I go in."

"Bob!" shouted Mr. Chisholm; "have you got through in there?"

"Yes, sir," sobbed Bob.

"Why, a person would think that the dead man was some relative of his!" said Henderson, in surprise. "To tell you the truth, I never saw the boy before."

"Well, then, come out," said Mr. Chis-

holm. "Be careful to look in all his pockets to see that you don't miss anything."

Elam and Bob came out in obedience to Mr. Chisholm's instructions, and it was plain to everybody standing around that there was no sham about their feelings. Elam's face looked as long as your arm, while Bob had evidently been crying, and I took notice of the fact that it had an effect upon the men standing around. Of course there were two sides to the question. Some were in favor of Bob, while others believed that Henderson had the right on his side; and still others were willing to wait until the matter had been thoroughly investigated before they inclined to either side. It was a big jury of four hundred men, and somehow I didn't feel at all uneasy.

"Now, sir, you are at liberty to go in as soon as you please," said Mr. Chisholm, waving his hand toward the wagon.

"Yes; and thanks to you these strangers have got everything they wanted," returned Henderson angrily.

"Look a-here, pardner, I am in favor of

doing whatever is right," said our leader, throwing more emphasis into his words than I had seen him use before. "This pocket-book has two tales to tell. If they speak in your benefit you shall have it. Tony, catch up! Boys, I am going to eat supper with you to-night."

Henderson went into the wagon, the men turned away to hunt their own wagons and get a bite to eat, and Tony began his preparations for supper. Mr. Chisholm sat down on a little mound of grass, rested his hands upon his knees, and looked thoughtfully at the ground; we boys stood around waiting impatiently for him to speak, and all watched for Henderson to come out of the wagon. He was gone a long time, and during his stay in there he threw everything about in the greatest confusion. He didn't leave a single thing the way he found it, and he was in so great a hurry to find something of which he was in search that our fellows had to go to work and straighten up things. I knew he wasn't making any friends by his unceremonious conduct. He at length appeared,

and, if his looks indicated anything, he was madder than he was when he went in.

"Things have come to a pretty pass, I must confess," said he, and he was almost boiling over with fury. "I must wait the pleasure of strangers, till they get ready to let me have my brother's things! What kind of a law do you call that?"

"It's the law in this State, whatever it may be elsewhere," said Mr. Chisholm.

"Upon my word, I never saw this boy before," continued Henderson. "He is some little upstart that my brother has seen since he came to Texas. He wouldn't have adopted anything like him, anyway."

"Why, Clifford Henderson, I know you," said Bob. "I remember when I used to see you in St. Louis——"

"You never saw me before in your life," returned Henderson, with a scowl on his forehead that might have made Bob tremble if he had been alone. "And I never saw you before."

"Easy, easy!" exclaimed Mr. Chisholm soothingly. "It will all come out when we

have had our supper. Until then just rest in peace."

Henderston started off with the air of a man who would have snatched things bald-headed if he had only possessed the opportunity, and when he was well out of hearing Mr. Chisholm continued:

"Bob, you want to keep mum and answer such questions as I shall ask you by and by. These boys have all signed the will in your favor? Well, that's enough. Let's see him get around that."

"But I can't help thinking that he has got something back of it," said Bob, between his sobs. "He goes about it so confidently that I am really afraid of him. He denies that he ever saw me."

"Of course. That's to be expected. But you are sure that you have seen him before?"

"Why, I knew him the minute I put my eyes on him," said Bob, looking up. "He was always the very picture of my father, and if father had wanted his property to go to him he would have said so. He would have told you so, Mr. Chisholm, while you were

sitting on the porch listening to his story. He would have told these boys so while he was telling them the history of the pocket-book."

"Well, take it easy. Things will come out all right in the end."

There was silence around that camp fire while we were eating supper, until Frank, the cowboy, came in and sauntered up for his share of it. He was evidently big with news, for when he had helped himself to a plateful and began looking around for a place to sit down, he said:

"Henderson's got something that didn't belong to him. He's been searching that body. He has got a hundred dollars in cash."

"What did he say?" exclaimed Mr. Chisholm.

"I say, he's got a hundred dollars in cash that he is going to put in his pocket and keep there. He says he found it in the wagon, and don't mean to let anybody take it away from him."

"We'll see about that," said Mr. Chisholm. "The money has got to go where the pocket-book goes."

After that there was more silence until we had all finished our suppers, and got our pipes out, and then the men began to stroll in one after the other. I noticed, too, that almost all the cowboys, some of the farmers, and a good many of the Rangers appeared to side with Mr. Chisholm, for they took particular pains to place themselves pretty close to him. Henderson was one of the first to appear, and when he seated himself on a log opposite our leader, he must have been surprised at the meagre showing he had.

"Well, boys," said Mr. Chisholm, knocking the ashes from his pipe, "we are all here, are we? If you know of anybody that's back send 'em on, for we want this thing done up in order. I'll appoint you all as jurymen, and we'll show some people out there in the settlements that we can do some things as well as they can. The first thing that is done when a man dies is to read his will; but first I must have every article that belongs to him. You know it all goes where the will goes, don't you?"

Of course that was settled. All the boys

standing around agreed to that. But Mr. Chisholm wasn't satisfied. He put it to a vote, and such a sonorous "Aye!" as resounded through that grove of willows was never heard there before.

"I have no business to act as judge, but I know a story which may fit well into the case," Mr. Chisholm hastened to explain, "and consequently I shall put everything to a vote. It's settled, then, that I must have every article that belongs to Mr. Davenport. Henderson, I'll thank you to hand over that hundred dollars."

"What hundred dollars?" enquired the man; but a person could see that he was slightly uneasy. He did not like Mr. Chisholm's way of talking.

"The hundred dollars you got while you were in the wagon," returned Mr. Chisholm. "You done something when you were in the wagon that you had no business to do. You searched the body."

"Well, I did it because I thought he had some papers about him that I had more business with than anybody else," said Henderson;

and when he uttered the words he looked at Mr. Chisholm as if to ask him what he was going to do about it. "I knew I couldn't get them while a stranger was about."

The man must have been crazy to talk this way in the presence of four hundred men who were assembled as a jury to try his rights of property. He was making enemies fast. I knew that around his camp fire he had talked to fellows who were gathered there until he had brought them to his own way of thinking; but they didn't suppose that he was going to act the dunce at the first opportunity.

"You say you won't hand them out?" enquired Mr. Chisholm, and anybody could see that he was getting mad.

"No, I won't! The money is mine!"

"Hand 'em out here!" roared Mr. Chisholm.

"I tell you I won't do it. It belongs to me!"

Our leader was a man who would not take this for an answer. He slowly and deliberately arose to his feet, the cowboys, especially his own and Mr. Davenport's, drawing nearer to him, and when he got up the shining

barrel of a six-shooter was looking Henderson squarely in the face. The man turned pale and stepped back. He gazed around at the cowboys, but none seemed ready to help him. On the contrary, they all folded their arms, and that was as good a sign as he wanted.

"What kind of a law do you call this?" said Henderson, putting his hand into his pocket. "If I had a pack of Comanches to decide for me I would stand just as much show."

"Well, it is the law here, and you are a fool for bucking against it," said Mr. Chisholm, as the money was placed in his hands. It was a large pile of money to contain one hundred dollars, and I was glad to see that he spoke about it. "Judging by the contents of your pocket you got rather more than a hundred dollars while you were about it," he added, with a smile. "So far so good! Now the next thing is the reading of the will."

Mr. Chisholm, who was the coolest man I ever saw to pass through such an ordeal, seated himself on the grass hummock again, and produced the pocket-book from inside

his coat. He opened it and laid it upon his knee, and of course we all strained our necks to get a glimpse of it. The first thing that came into view was a little pile of letters, all endorsed, and confined by a rubber band such as business men use to keep their correspondence in one place. Mr. Chisholm pulled the topmost one out and looked at it.

CHAPTER VII.

TOM HAS AN IDEA.

"THE first thing I have struck here is a receipt for $23.40 paid to Lemuel Bailley, dated October 23, 18—. Why, that's a long time before the drought came," said Mr. Chisholm, looking up. "Is Bailley here?"

"Here, sir," responded Bailley, who was one of Mr. Davenport's cowboys. "I remember of giving Mr. Davenport that receipt. I wanted it to—to——"

"Go on a spree with," interrupted Mr. Chisholm. "Well, you got it, didn't you? The next is also a receipt. And so is the next one, and the next one. In fact I don't see anything but receipts here."

Mr. Chisholm continued to call out the names of the payees of the receipts, some containing money paid to the cowboys, some relating to supplies of various kinds purchased at the store, handing each one to

some man who stood near him to see if he was right, until he had but few papers left in the bundle. The longer he read the more astonished he became, until finally he turned the pocket-book upside down to show that it was empty.

"That's all," said he. "There is nothing but receipts in it. What is your pleasure with the pocket-book? Shall it go to this man who has not grieved any over Mr. Davenport's death——"

"I don't want it," said Henderson, who was paler now than when he was looking into Mr. Chisholm's six-shooter. "The pocket-book I wanted contains papers that relate to me. I have nothing whatever to do with the receipts."

"Or shall it go to the boy who has done nothing but mourn for him ever since he was brought in?" said Mr. Chisholm, paying no heed to the interruption. "Of course the money goes with it."

"Now you're talking," said Henderson, brightening a little. "Give me the money and let this boy have the pocket-book. It's

mine, and I don't see why you should want to keep it from me."

"And you say you never saw this boy before?" said Mr. Chisholm.

"Never in my life," returned Henderson. "When I saw that boy come by me and go into the wagon I was dumfounded."

"Bob, you say you have seen this man before?"

"I used to see him every day in St. Louis," replied Bob, who was very much cast down. "He used to live at our house."

"He is very much mistaken. He never saw me. I have never been in St. Louis in my life."

"Seeing that Henderson is next of kin," said one of the farmers, stepping forward, "I think the money ought to go to him."

"And the pocket-book to Bob?" added Mr. Chisholm.

"Why, in course. I think so."

"Is that in form of a resolution?"

"Well, yes."

"Can I get a second to it?"

The answer that came up from four hun-

dred throats was enough to show Bob that all his hopes of winning the money was gone, even before the motion was put; but put it was, and it was carried unanimously.

"Now all opposed say 'No'!" said Mr. Chisholm.

There was no one at all who answered. Those who didn't vote wanted to think the matter over before giving their decision. Mr. Chisholm had placed his hand in his pocket and brought out the roll of bills, which he gave to Henderson, and at the same time he laid the pocket-book on Bob's knee. The latter's hands closed about it as though it had contained the will he had expected to find there. He didn't care a cent for the money—he would have given it all to have his father back to him, but the pocket-book was something that Mr. Davenport had handled. He would cherish it as long as he lived.

"There's somebody in camp who has removed that pocket-book that I wanted to see," said Henderson, as he clutched the bills and thrust them into his pocket. "I know my brother well enough to understand his

business, and when he saw his end coming he didn't let the matter drop here. He has got a will somewhere."

"Lem! Frank!" shouted Mr. Chisholm.

The two cowboys instantly stepped forward.

"You were the first to get to Mr. Davenport when he fell off his horse?" continued our leader.

"We were," answered the two cowboys, in concert.

"Did you watch carefully to see that nobody else touched him?"

"Yes, sir, we did. We knew he had that pocket-book."

"Was the guard that was placed over him a reliable person?"

"There's none better. Mebbe you'll say we took it!" said Frank, seeing that Henderson gazed at him with a smile of disbelief on his face. "You say that once an' you won't say it again!"

"I am not saying anybody took it," said Henderson. "I am simply saying that it is gone. Anybody can say that, I suppose?"

"Yes; but you say what you had on your mind an' see how you will come out! We know a story worth a dozen of yours."

"Easy, easy!" said Mr. Chisholm, catching Frank by the arm. "This matter is settled for the time being. Now we will go to bed and sleep on it. Maybe it will look different to us in the morning."

Mr. Chisholm filled his pipe with great deliberation, and the four hundred men who had stood around to settle the case, taking it for granted that the court had adjourned until more evidence could be obtained, strolled off to their own camps. I was glad to see that very few of them went with Henderson. Although they had decided in his favor, giving him the money and Bob the receipts, somehow they didn't feel right about it. But the question was, where was the will?

"Of all the mean, sneaking courts that ever I heard of——" began Frank.

"Now, Frank, that will do," said Lem, taking him by the arm and leading him away. "I know what you want to say, and whenever you get to talkin' you let out some swear

words that don't sound well. Mr. Chisholm is bossin' this thing."

"But he never asked us to tell our story," continued Frank. "We uns could have knocked that fellow's case higher than the moon."

"An' he never told his own," said Elam.

"What good would it have done to tell everything we knew when there was no will to back it up?" said Mr. Chisholm, throwing back a brand upon the fire with which he had lighted his pipe. "When we get the will we'll talk to him. Bob, did you ever know your father to have two pocket-books like the one you have got in your clothes?"

"No, sir. I never saw him have but the one," said Bob, taking out the pocket-book and looking at it. "The man has got everything father owned. But, believe me, I don't care for that. I am young and can easily make a living."

Mr. Chisholm drew his hand hastily across his eyes, as I had seen him do before, and started off for his own camp, while the rest of us sat down to think the matter over. I never

saw men and boys so completely done up as we were, who were sitting around that fire, and I will venture to say that Bob thought less about the money than we did. He had been brought up in the belief that it was all his own, and now he had lost it. I tell you I felt sorry for him. He sat gazing into the fire for a short time, then spoke a few words to Elam, who went off and returned with his blankets. He made up a bed under the wagon and laid down there with Bob. Tom Mason was the second one who was badly perplexed. He would gaze steadily into the fire, as if he there hoped to find a solution to some problem he was working out in his mind, and then at me, moving his lips, as he always did when anything troubled him, and finally he arose and gave me a nod, which I readily understood. I followed him through the willows, and finally stood on the edge of the prairie, where the cattle, having got their fill of the water, were lying down. There were no sentries out to-night. A stampede was the last thing we had to fear.

"Say, Carlos, did you hear what Mr. Chis-

holm had to say to Bob about his father having another pocket-book like the one he had in his clothes?" he whispered, after looking all around to make sure that there was no one within hearing. "Now, it has just occurred to me that perhaps there is another one, and that Mr. Davenport put it into his pocket."

"But Bob says there isn't any other," said I, jumping at the conclusion. That very same thing had been running in my own mind, and I was anxious to hear what Tom thought about it. "It looks like the pocket-book that he slammed in his hands when he told us his story."

"That may be; but I tell you he has got another," said Tom earnestly. "The other one is hidden somewhere about the house."

"I wish I was as certain of it as you are," said I.

"Well, now, the only way we can find out is to go there and give everything a good overhauling, when there is nobody there to prevent us," said Tom.

"Don't you suppose that Henderson has thought of that already?"

"Let him. Who cares? We will go there and give things another examination after he has left. I tell you, Carlos, it is our only chance," insisted Tom. "And with that pocket-book in our hands we can carry the day, I bet you."

"Do you mean to go without letting anybody know it?"

"Certainly. Henderson will wake up and find Bob here, and that is all he cares for. I don't suppose he has taken a single glance at us. Will you go?"

"We'll have to see Mr. Chishólm first."

"Exactly. I don't imagine that our horses can stand the trip——"

"They've got to stand it," said I, for Tom was so anxious about the matter that I began to feel some of his enthusiasm. "If Mr. Chisholm thinks it safe I will go. But, Tom, we have men to deal with who are just as cunning as we are. I'll bet you that we find that ranch overhauled when we get there."

"They can't travel faster than we can," said Tom confidently.

"Yes, they can. They are working for

money now, and they will travel night and day."

"Well, let's go and see Mr. Chisholm. We can't do anything as long as we stand talking here. I don't know where his camp is; do you?"

No, I didn't know where the camp was, but that made no difference to me. The only way I could find it was to look for it, and that I proceeded to do, leaving Tom outside on the prairie. We walked along the edge of the willows until we saw a light shining through them, and then I walked in. It proved to be Mr. Chisholm's camp. There were a dozen men standing around in little groups talking about the incidents of Mr. Davenport's death, and a little apart from all of them sat Mr. Chisholm, smoking, as usual.

"I guess Henderson didn't feel very good over the decision we reached, giving him the money and Bob the receipts," said one of the men. "Five hundred dollars is what he got, and that aint nothing to him. Where did he come from, anyhow?"

"He's a speculator," said another. "He

don't do anything, but just buys and sells cattle. He's got a nice little thing in having Mr. Davenport's cattle, if they were only in good trim."

"But that aint what he wants," said a third. "Mr. Davenport has got some money somewhere in some bank or another, and he wants authority to draw it out."

That was all I wanted to hear, so I stepped up to Mr. Chisholm and gave him a friendly nudge. Then I walked off to the place where I had left Tom Mason, and he followed along after me. I could see that he was very much depressed, so after he had gone a short distance out of hearing of the men who stood at the fire, I said:

"Mr. Chisholm, Tom Mason thinks there is another pocket-book."

"There now," said he, and he stopped as suddenly as though I had aimed a blow at him. "That thing has been running in my head, too. But what made Tom think of it?"

"Here he is, and he can explain the matter for himself," I answered. "Now, Tom, give it to Mr. Chisholm just as you gave it to me."

It did not take Tom long to do that. Tom was a good talker when he had anything on his mind, and he had Mr. Chisholm with him from the start. The man listened intently until he got through, and then gave Tom a slap on the back that I thought would have driven him into the ground.

"Them's the very points that I have been running over in my own head ever since the court adjourned," said he gleefully. "Now, how are you going to work it? Do you intend to go off without letting anybody know it? Remember that you have got some men to deal with that are just as smart as you are. There's something about that Henderson that I don't like any too well."

"That is just what we intend to do," replied Tom. "From some things I have heard of the man I don't like him too well myself, and we can get to the house and give the things a thorough overhauling before he gets there. If we can find the pocket-book we'll come back and tell you of it, and all you will have to do will be to go to that bank and stop the money."

"But I don't know where the bank is," said Mr. Chisholm. "That's what's bothering of me now. It may be some bank in St. Louis."

That was a set-back that Tom hadn't thought of. He looked at me and then looked down at the ground.

"Never mind. You go on up to the house and search high and low for that pocket-book. Don't leave a stone unturned that one can hide a pocket-book under, and when you get through come back and tell me what luck you have had. I guess if anybody can find it you can."

"I think so too, Mr. Chisholm," said I. "Tom's the luckiest fellow I ever saw. He found the nugget when we had almost given up the search."

"The nugget?" repeated Mr. Chisholm.

"Yes, sir; the one that Elam Storm lost fourteen years ago. He knew it was around there somewhere, but no one could tell him where it was. Tom in poking around and following what he considered to be a blind trail, stumbled onto it."

"Why, I didn't hear anything about that," said Mr. Chisholm, casting a glance of admiration upon Tom. "Was there much into it?"

"It was as big as he could lift," I replied. "Elam has got the most of it in a belt under his clothes. We came here to buy cattle, you know."

"Well, I must hear all about that some day. Now you go and hunt for that pocket-book, and don't you come back without it. Take plenty of grub along so that you will have something to eat, for if you don't you will be up stump. Good-by, and good luck to you!"

Mr. Chisholm turned about and walked into the willows, and Tom and I stood and looked at each other. He had wished us good luck the same as if we were going on a day's journey, and yet it would take us a week to go back to the ranch, and another week to get back to camp, to say nothing of the difficulties we would meet on the way. I didn't mind it in the least, but I saw that Tom didn't know what to think about it. When he got into a

place that he could not think his way out of, he turned to me.

"Is that all he has to say to us?" asked Tom.

"What more do you want?" I enquired. "He has bid us good-by and told us to take plenty of provisions along, and that's about all he can do. Now, Tom, can you saddle our horses without arousing anybody? If you can, I will go to the wagon and get some grub."

Yes, Tom could do that, and he started off at once to carry out his part of the programme. The horses were hitched in the outer edge of the willows, and consequently he had nothing to do but to make two trips to the fire after our saddles and weapons; while I had to work in the presence of everybody, and there were two men around our camp fire that I did not want to know anything about it. They may have been all right, but Mr. Davenport had not taken them into his confidence and that made me suspicious of them. When I got within reach of the circle of light thrown out by our camp

fire I moved with cautious footsteps, for Elam and Bob were sleeping under the wagon, and threw aside the canvas covering before I stepped in. Merciful Heavens, what a sight there was presented to my gaze! Everything in the wagon had been pawed over, and furthermore, some of the things had been thrown upon the body of Mr. Davenport. It was some of that Henderson's work, and showed how badly he felt over the death of his brother! If I had been in the humor to do it I could have had some shooting done in that camp inside of five minutes, but instead of that I sprang into the wagon and removed the articles of desecration, and placed the blanket evenly over the figure as it was before.

"This is one thing I shall always blame myself for," said I, under my breath. "I ought to have brought Mr. Chisholm here at once, and showed him what that man is capable of doing. I believe I could have turned the tables in short order without the long ride that is before me."

So filled with rage that I could hardly see,

I proceeded to select the grub that was to do Tom and me during our ride to Mr. Davenport's ranch and back: two slices of bacon and a bag to put them in, some meal, and a little salt. That was all we took with us. I lowered them to the ground and was about to follow them, when I saw that Frank was awake and looking at me. Placing my finger upon my lips I walked over and talked to him.

"Where are you fellows going?" he asked, in his ordinary tone of voice. "One would think you were going to skip the camp."

"And so we are," I replied, in a whisper. "Tom Mason and I are going after the missing pocket-book."

"Carlos," said he, in the same cautious whisper, "your head is level. I tell you that man has a pocket-book——"

"I know he has, and we are going after it," said I, anxious to bring the interview to a close as soon as possible. "If we are missed don't you say one word. I say, Frank, that Henderson is a mighty mean chap. When he went into the wagon looking for the pocket-book he threw the things all about. He

didn't even take pains to see that they went on the floor, either."

"The blamed skunk!" said Frank, raising himself on his elbow. "You don't mean to say that he threw them on——"

"Yes, I do. He threw them all over him. But it is too late to remedy the matter now. I put them off where they belong, and I only tell you this so that you can make him shut his mouth if he begins working his chin too much to-morrow."

"Dog-gone you! why didn't you tell me before you touched the things? I would have made him take them off himself. Well, good luck to you! Look everywhere for that pocket-book."

If Tom had been there he wouldn't have found any fault with Frank's parting, for he threw into his grip all the strength that a strong man could. After I had received the assurance that he wouldn't notice our absence on the morrow, I gathered up the provisions and started for the prairie. Tom was already there, and he was holding by the bridle the two horses which he had saddled, and our

weapons laid beside him on the ground. When I told him what work Henderson had made in the wagon he was utterly dumfounded.

"Why didn't you tell somebody of it?" he asked.

"Because I put the things back where they belong," I replied.

"Well, you ought not to have done it. That would have made me mad enough for anything."

"Well, keep still, and let us mount our horses and go on. You can say more about it when we get further away."

By this time I had given him some of the provisions, which I saw him fasten behind his saddle. I did the same with the others, and when I had gathered up my weapons we mounted and rode away into the darkness. I was satisfied that no one but Mr. Chisholm and Frank knew of our absence.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOM'S LUCK.

IT was just such a night as you would take if you wanted to go a-fishing. The moon shone down on us through a thick haze, such as we had seen many a night since our arrival on the prairie, and every little sound that broke the stillness could be heard a long way off. We could distinctly hear the Rangers talking, and their camp was on the other side of Trinity. Everything that approached us on the plains—even the cattle, which, having had a rest after their drink, were beginning to crop the grass—loomed up on us to twice its natural size, and everything betokened rain; but we had seen so many such nights as that in Texas that we never gave it a moment's thought. We walked our horses until we could no longer hear the Rangers talking, and then put them to a little faster gait.

"I can't get over the way that man Henderson has acted," said Tom. "It seems to me that you ought to have told somebody of it."

"How many men did you ever see killed in a fair, stand-up fight?" I asked.

"None, I am glad to say."

"I have, and that's the reason I didn't tell anybody what I saw. Henderson wouldn't have been alive now."

"I guess, after all, you did for the best," added Tom; "but I would have been too mad to take a second thought. How do you suppose Henderson knew that his brother was with this outfit?"

I replied that he didn't know it at all. He was only a speculator, and when the Rangers were ordered out to preserve the peace he came out with them, to see if he could find something that was worth buying.

"And if we don't find the will he's got a fine lot now," I said. "Just think of the eight or nine thousand head of cattle he got from Mr. Davenport. Now that he has got them here he can sell them for five dollars a

head, easy enough That will be more than enough to put him on his feet."

"But I tell you that will is going to spoil his kettle of fish!" answered Tom, as confidently as though he had the document in his pocket. "You will see that we will have it in our hands when we come back this way."

I wished then that I felt as confident of it as Tom did, but somehow I saw too many difficulties in the way. In the first place, there was Henderson, who wouldn't believe that that pocket-book was the only one Mr. Davenport had, and would be equally certain to send someone to the ranch to look for it. And if he found it, I wasn't sure that we could get it away from him. When a man pulls a loaded gun on you and tells you to stand where you are, you had better stand. Then, again, there was the invalid, with all his eccentricities of hiding things where no one would ever think of looking for them; in fact, I didn't believe he could have found it himself if he had been going to the ranch with us. Taking these two things into consideration, I thought we had undertaken

something of a scheme. But I said nothing about it, for I did not want to discourage Tom. Everything depended on him.

For hours we rode along, talking over matters and things that had fallen to our lot in Texas, and were beginning to look around for a belt of post oaks, in which we could camp for the day, when Tom, who was going on ahead, suddenly stopped and held up his finger. I had heard the same sound, but didn't think it best to speak of it. Presently it came again, faint and far off, but there was no mistaking it.

"It is thunder, as sure as I am a foot high," said Tom, his face brightening as if he had just discovered something.

"It is, for a fact! I heard it long ago, but you were so busy talking that you didn't notice it," I replied. "I really believe it is going to rain."

"Grant that it may be a deluge. I will gladly swim from here to the ranch if they will only send water enough. There is some timber straight ahead, and the sooner we reach it the sooner we will be safe."

It did look like rain, sure enough, and even our horses felt the coming breeze and were not disposed to wait for the spur. One would have thought there was a regiment of cavalry camped in the woods toward which we were hastening, for the animals neighed to each other as fast as they could take breath. The sky became overcast, after a while the moon was completely shut out from our view, and then everything was as dark as one could wish; but we were already headed for the timber and did not care for that. At last we were fairly inside the protecting branches, and then the storm came. What a deluge it was! It wasn't a "norther," such as we would have expected a month or two later, but a regular downpour of rain, and the lightning flashed incessantly. Whatever it may have been for us—and we were as wet as drowned rats before we had staked out our horses—we knew it was the life of half our cattle in the drive. We whistled and sang as we took our saddles off our horses and put them on the leeward side of the trees so that we could keep out of the storm, and all the while it was

so dark that we couldn't see each other. Let some of you who haven't seen a drop of rain for sixteen months, and the streams were all dry, and you had to carry your water from a distance, imagine how good it seemed to us. Every time the lightning flashed with unwonted fury, and it seemed to us that one or the other of us had been struck, I would call out as soon as I could make myself heard: "Tom, are you there yet?" and the answer that came back was always a cheering one: "Yes, I'm here yet. A man who was born to be hanged can't be struck by lightning."

To make a long story short the storm continued all that day and never let up a bit; and Tom and I slept through it all. We picked out a comfortable position on the side of the trees opposite the storm, and wrapping up head and ears in blankets, went off into the land of dreams. When we awoke the storm had passed and the moon was just coming up, and our first thought was to get something to eat; for it had rained so hard all day that any attempt to start a fire would have been useless. Overjoyed as we were to see the

rain, we still had sense enough to take care of our provisions. Tom had the salt stowed away inside of his coat so that the water could not get at it, and the meal I had provided for. I had taken the bag that contained it in between my knees and covered it over with my blanket, and although the outside of the meal was wet, the inside of it was perfectly dry.

"Remember, now, that you are to get three meals in one," said Tom, handing out the salt and going out to attend to the horses which, having eaten all the boughs within reach, now showed a disposition to get at the grass. "I am as hungry as a wolf."

It took an hour to get supper, and we did full justice to it. By that time the horses had got their fill of the grass, and I never saw them act so much like themselves as they did when we brought them in to put the saddles on them. They acted as though they were impatient to be off.

"Now we are fairly afloat again," said Tom, after we had ridden out on the prairie and put our horses into a gentle lope. "I

wonder if that man Henderson has missed us yet?"

"You may be sure he has," I replied. "And if he doesn't send somebody to head us off or come himself, I shall miss my guess. We mustn't think we are going to have this all our own way."

"Oh, I don't!" said Tom hastily. "But let me get the first pull at it and I'll find that pocket-book. My luck never went back on me yet."

I had not been long on the plains before I became really amazed at the sight that was presented to me. One, to have been with us, would have thought that we had purposely left a good portion of our herd behind, a prey for the wolves, for as far as our eyes could reach we saw cattle that had been abandoned by us as unfit to go farther, deliberately engaged in cropping the grass. The rain had revived them and they were doing what they could to save themselves. There must have been a thousand head within the range of our vision, and I knew that the cattlemen would soon be out after them. I

expressed this hope to Tom and was surprised to find that he did not agree with me.

"You hope the cattlemen will come out after them?" said he, looking amazed. "Well, I don't! The men will be certain to see us——"

"They won't be out for a day or two, and consequently we'll be beyond their reach," I answered. "I am not afraid of the cattlemen. It is that Henderson that I am afraid of."

We were eight days on the road, and all the time our horses showed signs of increased vigor, and at last we came across some things which Tom remembered; and finally the whitewashed walls of the ranch came into view. Then Tom began to look sober. It was easy enough to talk about finding the pocket-book, but to *find* it was a different thing. We approached the ranch with fear and trembling because we didn't know who had been there since we left, but we found everything just as it ought to be. We thought it necessary to stake out our horses because the rain had started the grass so

much that they would have strayed off before we had left them an hour.

"Now, Tom," said I, as I drove the picket-pin into the ground and picked up my rifle and put it on the porch, so as to have it handy, "come on and show us your luck. Your luck never went back on you yet, and this is the time to prove it. Yes, sir; everything is just as we left it," I added, as I pushed open the door. "There has nobody been here."

Tom placed his rifle in one corner of the cabin and walked over to Mr. Davenport's bed as confidently as though he already felt the pocket-book in his grasp, picked up the clothing one by one and shook them out, placing the articles carefully on the floor, so that he wouldn't have to look at them again, and I sat down in the invalid's rocking chair and watched his movements. But not a thing happened to come out. At last he came to the mattress, but here, too, his luck was at fault. Slowly and by handfuls he took out the hay with which the mattress had been stuffed, but not a thing in the shape of a

THE SEARCH FOR THE MISSING POCKETBOOK.

pocket-book did he find. Then he removed the wooden slats that held the bed up and cautiously scrutinized every opening, and even looked under the bed itself, but it was all in vain. Whatever else the invalid did with his property, he certainly hadn't hid it about where he lay.

"I declare, my luck has played me false for once in my life," said Tom, seating himself on the bed and giving up with blank despair. "I was sure that pocket-book was hidden somewhere about his bed."

"Well, then, I must take a hand," said I, pulling over one of the other beds. "Here are plenty of others to be examined. Let's pull them all to pieces."

Tom went to work once more, but I knew we were on the wrong scent. We pulled all the beds to pieces, and then I got a chair and devoted myself to the rafters, especially all around the house where they came down to the wall, and Tom got a sharp stick somewhere and pried up the stones there were in the fireplace, but not a thing did we find. We spent at least an hour on the inside of the

ranch, and then, utterly discouraged, we went out on the porch and I pulled out my pipe.

"My luck has gone back on me, too," said I. "Where do you suppose Mr. Davenport hid that thing?"

"I don't believe he could tell himself if he were alive," answered Tom. "He must have felt very bad when he hid it, for he took the wrong pocket-book. Do you imagine he hid it under the house?"

"I don't know. We might as well look everywhere, now that we are here. There is one thing about it," I added, "he didn't know but he had the right one at the time he fell from his horse. When he fell he put his hands on his pocket-book. Who are those coming there?"

I did not need to point out the direction of the three men who were approaching, because they were in plain sight, and Tom saw them readily enough. They were coming fast, too, as if they feared they might be too late. Tom never changed his position, nor did he make an effort to pick up his rifle.

"It is somebody coming to look for the

pocket-book," said he. "Let them go on and see what sort of luck they will have. It wouldn't surprise me if they went straight to it."

"No, sir; they can't do that!" said I hastily. "We have been to every spot in the ranch,—in the cupboard, the fireplace, the beds,—and I would like to see them haul out a thing the size of that pocket-book that we have missed. I declare, it is Henderson and Coyote Bill. They're there as big as life. Now, where did Henderson find Coyote Bill so quickly? That is what I should like to know."

I was in something of a trap; I could see that plainly enough. If Coyote Bill should accuse me of treachery, there was only one thing he could do with me. They came up as swiftly as their horses could foot it, and I saw that one of them carried his revolver in his hand. We sat there on the porch and looked at them. Coyote Bill was the first one who spoke.

"Morning," said he cheerfully. "Did you boys find it?"

"We found never the thing," answered Tom. "We stayed here in hopes that you would go straight to it. We have been in every place and it isn't there."

"Well, you two can stand up and put your hands above your heads," said the stranger. "We'll begin the search by going through you first."

"Say, Pete, you won't find anything there," interposed Bill.

"I'm going through them to find out," answered Pete. "I am going to look in every nook and corner of the place before I go away. That pocket-book is here and we are going to have it."

With one accord Tom and I arose to our feet, extended our hands above our heads, and Pete put up his revolver and proceeded to "sound" us very thoroughly. He felt in all our pockets, and run his hand over the seams of our clothing, to see if there was anything there to remind him of papers that had been stowed away.

"You needn't be so particular," said I. "We have been here about an hour before

you came, and we haven't had time to stow away any papers. We wouldn't be foolish enough to do that, anyway."

"Never you mind," said Pete. "I am going through you. Some of you boys know where that pocket-book is, and I'm going to know too, before I get through with you."

"Holy Moses! Just look a-here!" said Coyote Bill, who just then entered the house. "If the pocket-book was in here those boys have got it, sure."

"But I tell you we haven't got it," said I. "We are just as anxious to find it as you are."

"Are you going to give it up?" said Pete, once more drawing out his revolver. "Where is it?"

"You can shoot if you please, but I tell you that you won't make anything by it," I replied, looking him squarely in the eye. "That pocket-book is hidden where no one will ever find it."

"Do you know where it is?"

"No, I don't! And that is the honest truth."

"Aw! Pete, let him alone," said Bill.

He stood just on the threshold with his hands against his hips, but making no effort to continue the search we had begun. "He hasn't got it. It isn't here, and we might as well go under the house. Have you boys looked up among the rafters?"

"Yes; we have looked everywhere."

I wasn't as thoroughly cowed as some boys might have been, for I saw that Coyote Bill was disposed to be friendly toward me; so I had plenty of time to study the expression on Henderson's face. When he first rode up to the ranch it wore a determined look which said that he knew we had the object of which we were in search, and that he was bound to have it; but when he watched the results of Pete's examination, and stood in the door and witnessed the confusion that Tom and I had made in the cabin, the expression of serious resolve he had on his countenance gave way to a look of intense and bitter rage. The ranch looked as bad as the wagon did when he got through with it. If he had been alone and held the power in his hands I wouldn't have felt so much at my ease.

"Well, you see it isn't here, don't you?" said Coyote Bill soothingly. "I don't believe the old man had any other pocket-book, anyway."

"That's my opinion," said Pete. "If he had, where is it?"

This was enough to set Henderson fairly to boiling, but he dared not show it.

"I say he did!" said he, striving hard to keep down his rising anger. "What made Bob look so blue when the contents of this pocket-book were read? I tell you that the old man had another, and it is somewhere in this house."

"I think he had another one, too," I answered, wishing to keep on good terms with Bill. Although he didn't say much, I could see that he was on the very point of using his revolver; and as I had seen something of that kind once or twice before, I did not care to see another. "He has got another pocket-book somewhere, but whether he took it in the wagon with him or left it here in the house, I don't know."

"Where is it, then?" asked Bill.

"That's more'n I know."

"I don't like to take such a ride as this for nothing, and I am going under the house," said Bill. "Come on, Pete."

"But aint you afraid to trust these boys here alone?" asked Pete.

"No. I trusted one of them before I made any move; didn't I, Carlos?"

"Yes, and he went back on you," said Henderson. "If he didn't you would have got the pocket-book."

"Did you go back on me, Carlos?"

"That's a pretty question for a man to ask," I answered, scowling savagely at Henderson. "I knew you could shoot as well as anybody."

"That's what I knew, too. Come on, Pete! If Henderson is afraid to trust them, he can stay here with them."

But that was something Henderson was not prepared to do. He wanted to be close to the men when they found that pocket-book, for there was so much in it that he was afraid to trust them alone with it; so when they moved off and crawled under the ranch, he

went with them. Tom and I returned to our seats on the porch, saying never a word to each other, and for an hour listened to the movements of the men that were under the house. Sometimes I was almost certain they had found it, but when they came out after their search was over, I told myself that the invalid had never hidden anything under there, for they were as dirty as they could well be. They were all mad, but Coyote Bill brightened up when he saw me.

"Well, Carlos, you think you won't go with me?" said he.

"And steal cattle?" I exclaimed.

"Well, that's what some folks call it," said Bill, with a laugh.

"No, I think I will stay here and be honest. I find I can make a living better that way than I can by stealing. Are you going to give up the search?"

"We might as well. There is no pocket-book here, or if there is it is hidden where no one will ever find it. So we may as well give it up and go down there to Trinity."

Henderson was not yet satisfied. He had

given the under part of the house a good overhauling, had prodded every little mound of earth that looked as though it might recently have been thrown up, and now he was going to try the upper part. He had brought a stick with him, and with it he dug down in the fireplace until he went so far that the solid earth resisted his efforts, and all the while the men stood by watching him. After that he devoted his attention to the things we had taken off the beds, throwing them into one corner, and when the last handful of hay had been tossed aside he was obliged to confess that there was nothing there.

"Are you satisfied now?" asked Bill. "If you are, we are going."

"That pocket-book is somewhere about this ranch, and I know it," said Henderson. "I don't like to give it up."

But all the same, when he saw his companions mounting their horses, in readiness to go away, he followed their example. They went away without saying a good word to us. Tom settled back in his chair and crossed his legs, while I filled my pipe and looked at him.

CHAPTER IX.

HENDERSON IS ASTONISHED.

"WHERE is all your luck gone now, Tom?" I enquired.

"It's gone," said Tom disconsolately, "and I am left here flat on my back. I could have taken my oath that the pocket-book was hidden somewhere about that bed. What do you suppose made that Coyote Bill so friendly with you? If there had been any other man than you here he would have talked rough to him."

"And perhaps have done something rough," I added. "I don't know what made him act so, unless he had an idea that he was going to get me to go off with him. He is going to see some trouble some day. But what about breakfast? I am getting hungry."

"Let us put some of these stones back

where they belong and cook our breakfast in here," said Tom. "Somehow I don't feel like going out in the woods. That pocket-book is concealed around here, and I would like to know where it is."

I shrugged my shoulders, and seized a bucket to go out and bring some water, and Tom, taking that as an answer that he could guess the matter as well as I, went in to put some of the stones back in the fireplace. I was not gone more than ten minutes, and when I came back I found Tom on the porch fairly convulsed with excitement. He could hardly stand still.

"Say, Carlos, where are the men that were here?" he stammered, as plainly as he could speak.

"They have just ridden over that hill out of sight," I replied. "Is anything up?"

"There's no chance for them to come back?"

"Of course not. They are gone."

"There isn't any of their party loafing around ready to come back and see what we have found, is there?"

"Why, Tom," I exclaimed, "have you found the pocket-book?"

"Come in here," said Tom, seizing me by the arm and dragging me into the ranch. "Now, there's the pocket-book—— Well, it isn't in plain sight, but it is so near it that you will think those men ought to have discovered it. See here!"

Tom seized a stick which one of the men had used and began poking around in the ashes that covered the hearthstone. No one had thought of moving that stone, for it was so large that the sticks which supported the chimney came down on each side of it; but the dirt under the edges of it had been thrown out, until it was found that there was nothing there. The ashes which concealed it were those that had been left there from the last fire Mr. Davenport had made, when he didn't feel like going out of doors, and there was scarcely enough of them to cover a quarter of a dollar, let alone a good-sized pocket-book; but Tom knew right where to go, and with the second prod he brought out the pocket-book—the identical mate to the one that was now in

camp. Mr. Davenport had concealed it there on the morning after Coyote Bill had made an effort to steal it, and had forgotten where he put it. The one that contained the receipts he had placed under his pillow, and when we got ready to start in the morning,—we packed up in something of a hurry, you will understand,—he had taken that one with him! I was profoundly astonished. I jumped forward and picked up the pocket-book, giving it a slap or two in my hands to clear it of the ashes that clung to it, and opened it.

"I tell you my luck hasn't gone back on me yet," said Tom, who was overjoyed at his discovery.

"Why, Tom, how did you find it?" I asked. I couldn't think of anything else to say.

"I have been thinking about it all the time," answered Tom. "And I couldn't think of any place in the house that had not been looked into except these ashes, so I began to poke into them. At the second jab I made, out came the pocket-book."

I looked around until I found a chair, and

then seated myself to examine the pocket-book; for you will remember that we had taken a long ride, and we did not want to take another with the same object in view. The papers were all folded neatly away, and as I opened the first one I came to, my eyes caught the words: "In the name of God, Amen." That was the will, and it was all right. I looked at the conclusion, and there were the names of all of us as witnesses. The next paper I opened was a letter of instructions to Bob, and told him how to carry on his business if he wanted to make a success of it.

"I don't want to look any further," I said, folding up the papers. "Tom, you've got it as sure as the world."

Tom did not make any reply at once. He went out on the porch and all around the ranch to make sure that there was no one listening to us.

"Say, Carlos!" he exclaimed, as soon as he came back, "I've found the will, and now you have got to take charge of it. If you see anybody coming toward us on the way home, just

take out the pocket-book and drop it into the grass, and then when they have gone we'll come and find it. How does that strike you?"

"That will do," I replied. "Then we can say that we don't know where it is, only we'll have to keep a close watch of landmarks to find the place where we hid it. I wish I had your luck."

"I wish you had too," replied Tom, with a smile. "I notice that everybody is poking fun at me on account of it, but I tell you sometimes it comes handy. Now, if you will go out and cook breakfast I'll put everything back as I found it."

The breakfast didn't amount to much, for we were anxious to begin our homeward journey to see what effect the result of our search would have upon Bob. There was not one man in ten, who knew what we were going to the ranch for, who would have predicted our success, and we were equally anxious to hear what Lem and Frank would have to say about it. I heard Tom strike up a lively whistle in the ranch while I was gathering

wood for the fire, and in a few minutes he came out.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "What will you bet that Henderson isn't getting a good going over by this time?"

"I am quite sure he is," said I. "You know Pete said he didn't believe Mr. Davenport had another pocket-book, and Coyote Bill agreed with him. But we knew a story worth two of that!"

"I know it. And to think that we should find it before they were fairly out of sight of the building. Who—pee! My luck never went back on me yet."

Tom went back to his work, and when I had the bacon fairly under way and the corn bread done, I invited him to come out and eat breakfast, if his excitement would allow him to eat any. He had the things mostly picked up. Two of the beds hadn't been touched, and we would leave them for the cowboys who wouldn't have anything else to do. He came, and the way the breakfast disappeared was a caution. He ate more that I could have eaten to save my life, and I came to the con-

clusion that the excitement was not all on his side. In half an hour more we were on our homeward journey, and during the whole of that ride there was nothing happened that was worthy of narration. We performed the ride almost entirely by daylight. When we slept it was in a grove of post-oaks, and any one who had come upon our camp would not have found the pocket-book. I took particular pains to hide it before we turned in, and when morning came it was always there. It rained for two days during our journey, but we didn't mind that, and it was not long before we began to strike the advance guards of our cattle. No fight had occurred between the farmers and our outfit, because the former were men and knew just what they would do under the same circumstances. They and the Rangers camped on the other side of Trinity to see that we did not drive our cattle over, and when it rained the Rangers knew that their work was done and started at once for home, while the farmers remained a few days longer to guard their crops. Almost the first man we saw was Clifford Henderson, who was

out trying to sell his stock to some cattlemen, but the cattlemen did not like the way he had come in charge of it, and would not consent to buy. When he saw us approaching he rode to meet us, accompanied by three or four of the men whom he had been trying to induce to buy his cattle.

"I am glad I don't feel the way I did when I last saw this stock," said Tom. "I tell you I was glum then, and didn't know whether my luck was going to stand me in hand or not. There comes Henderson, but he has got some of our men with him, so that we need not be afraid. It beats me how he can associate with fellows like Coyote Bill, and then hold up his head when he gets among honest men."

"He knows that we won't tell of him until the proper time comes," said I. "I'll bet you that by the time this business is settled you can't put your hands on him."

"Where will he go?"

"He'll put out. Just as soon as he finds the will in our hands he will skip. You see if he don't."

But at this moment Henderson came along

as though he had a perfect right to be there. He was talking, and laying down some law to the men.

"I tell you that pocket-book was the only one Mr. Davenport had," said he. "When he was taken with that fit and fell from his horse, he placed his hands upon it to be sure that it was safe. Here are the boys; you can ask them. Did you find it?"

"Find what?" I asked; for I knew that Tom would expect me to do all the talking.

"Find the pocket-book," continued Henderson. "These men insist that there is another one somewhere, and that I haven't got any right to the cattle. Now I want to know if you found it."

"We looked over every place that you looked and didn't find any," I answered. "Every place except under the house."

"And I don't blame you for not going there," said Henderson, with a laugh. "We went under there and got as dirty as so many pigs. You saw me come there with two men, didn't you?"

"You certainly did."

"And I looked everywhere for the pocket-book and didn't find it," added Henderson. "In fact I examined everything, and not a thing in the shape of a pocket-book did I discover. I tell you, gentlemen, there is none there. Now, I can sell you these cattle cheaper than you can buy them anywhere else. I have got to go North on business, and I may not come back; and I want to get rid of everything I have got down here."

"Of all the impudence I ever heard, you are the beat," I muttered, and it was all I could do to keep from pulling out the pocket-book and shaking it under Henderson's nose; but I knew that wouldn't do. I must first place the pocket-book in Mr. Chisholm's hands, and then I could say what I had a mind to. While Henderson was talking he kept his eyes fastened upon one man, and another in the group looked as fixedly at me. I scowled at him repeatedly, and finally the man brightened up and said slowly:

"I'd like to buy these cattle, because I can get them cheaper than I can anywhere else;

but I want to be certain that the man has got a right to them before he lets 'em go."

"All the will that was made was in that pocket-book," said Henderson impatiently. "And you all saw that there was no will at all. Being next of kin I am entitled to all his property."

"*But,*" continued the man, "the boys say they did not find anything while you were there. Now I want to know if they found anything after you left. That's what's a-bothering of me."

I didn't make any reply to this question, I wanted it to be put to me before I answered. The men all looked at me, but I remained as dumb as one of the cattle that were feeding around.

"You don't answer that question," said the man.

"Do you ask it of me?"

"Certainly I do. There is nobody else to answer it."

"Then you have got me pinned down to a fine point, and if I reply to the question I shall do so truthfully. I did find something

after he left—or rather Tom did, and it amounts to the same thing."

"What was it?"

"A pocket-book."

"Where is it?" shouted Henderson, his eyes blazing with excitement. "Hand it out here!"

"It's in my pocket, and there it will stay until I can give it into the hands of Mr. Chisholm," I answered, as firmly as I could. "In it is a will which relates to Bob Davenport——"

"It is a fraud!" exclaimed Henderson, turning all sorts of colors. "Hand it out here so that I can look at it! I am not going to be cheated out of my cattle in this way."

"The will is in Mr. Davenport's own handwriting, and to it are attached our signatures, with Bob as a witness."

"It's a fraud—a clean and scandalous lie!" vociferated Henderson. "How much do you boys calculate you are going to make out of this?"

"Not a red cent!" I replied indignantly. "But you can talk of making some money

out of it when you come to the ranch in company with such men as——"

"That is neither here nor there," interrupted Henderson, who saw in a minute that I was about to expose him. "I want you to show me that will. I can tell you whether or not it is genuine."

"Well, boys, let's go and hunt up Mr. Chisholm," said one of the men, who saw that we were getting down to a fine point. "He is the lawyer in this business and will know exactly what ought to be done."

"I am just as good a lawyer as he is, and I don't need one; and furthermore, I won't have any!" declared Henderson. "I tell you I want to see the will. I will know whether or not it is genuine. I am here alone and you are five to my one. Let me see it, I tell you!"

Henderson was about as near crazy as a man could get and live, and if we had been alone I should have objected to show him the pocket-book; but there were two men there whom I was not afraid to trust. I looked at one of them, and he said:

"As he is the next of kin I think he has a

right to see the will. You may show it to him without any fear that he will get away with it. Get on the other side of him, boys!"

"If you are going to watch me in this way, you can keep your old will!" said Henderson, as plainly as he could speak, which, owing to his excitement and rage, might have been taken for something else. "You will find that there is a surrogate in this county who has to have the will proved, and I shall start in search of him before I am an hour older. Keep away from that horse. What are you putting your hands on him for?"

Two of the men, without paying any attention to what he said, "got around on the other side of him," one laying his hand upon his bridle and the other drawing his revolver and resting it across the hollow of his arm. I saw that Henderson was fairly cornered, and without any further comments I pulled out the pocket-book and gave it to the spokesman. When Henderson's eyes rested upon it it was all he could do to keep from snatching it.

"That first paper is the will," said I. "It

is signed by Robert Davenport, who, when he showed us the will, said: 'I take my oath that this is my proper signature,' or words to that effect. Tom Mason and I signed it, while Elam Storm made his mark. He can't write, you know. Bob Davenport signed it as a witness."

"I see you are all against me, but I want to see the will," said Henderson. "You had better mind what you are about, for they have a queer way of dealing with men in this part of the country who swear to a lie!"

"By gum! the boys have got it, sure enough," said the spokesman, as he ran his eye rapidly over the paper. "'In the name of God, Amen! I, Robert Davenport, being thoroughly convinced of the uncertainty of life, do hereby give and bequeath to my son, Robert Davenport, all the property of which I may die possessed, to wit:' There you have it. Do you want to see it?"

The man who held the revolver raised it to a level with Henderson's head, the man who had his grip on the bridle tightened it, and the spokesman passed the will over to Hen-

derson. My heart was in my mouth, for I did not know but the man, in his rage, would kill himself; but he did nothing of the sort. He ran his eye rapidly over the paper, and I saw that he was trying to find the name of the bank in which Mr. Davenport's bonds were deposited for safe keeping, and then I interfered.

"That's enough!" I exclaimed. "He doesn't want to get at the name of that bank, because he may get there before we do. Take it away from him!"

"You are too late, young man," said Henderson, as he readily gave up the will. "And now, I will bid you good-by. You are a pack of thieves, the last one of you!"

He made an effort to spur up his horse, but the man who held his bridle was not to be taken unawares.

"Take that back!" he exclaimed.

"Well, you want me to call you something, don't you?" said Henderson.

I think he was the coolest man I ever saw. That was twice he had looked into the muzzle of a revolver when the man who stood behind

it was just on the point of shooting, but he never changed color.

"Take it back!" said the man. "One—two——"

"Well, then, you are gentlemen, the last one of you," said the culprit. "Now, let me go, and when you get down to Austin you may be sure you will find me there. There isn't any law against that, I suppose?"

"No; you can go and come when you are a mind to; but you be sure that you don't come around our camp to-night!"

"You may be sure that I shall never come around there again. The next time you see me I shall be backed up by law!"

The man who held his bridle released it, and we sat in our saddles and saw Henderson gallop away, while the one who held the will folded it up and returned it to me. Henderson evidently knew where he was going, for he went in an awful hurry, and somehow I couldn't get it out of my mind that Bob was going to see trouble over the will after all. As we turned about and went back to camp I said to our spokesman:

"Who is that officer who is going to examine the will? I suppose we shall have to go to Austin with Bob?"

"The surrogate? Yes, he is called that in some States, but what in the world he is called here I don't know. I never had anything to do with the proving of wills, but we will go and see Mr. Chisholm. He will know all about it. By gum! you fellows got it, didn't you? And you say that he and two other men were there in the house and all over it and never found it? Tell us all about it."

It did not take me long to tell the cattlemen the history of our trip to the ranch and back, but I left out all allusions to Coyote Bill. I could do that and I knew that Tom wouldn't betray me. When the spokesman asked me who the men were, I could tell him that one was Henderson and the other was 'Rastus Johnson. Who the other was I didn't know, for I had been on the ranch all the time, and my opportunities for making acquaintances were very slight. I determined to tell Mr. Chisholm all about it, for I assure

you I did not feel like having secrets from my friends.

"'Rastus Johnson! I never knew him, but his knowing something about that pocket-book proves that he is a snake in the grass. I wonder if he has anything to do with Coyote Bill?"

"There comes Bob Davenport!" exclaimed Tom suddenly. "He is more interested in what we have to tell than anybody else."

I never was so glad of an interruption in my life. It got me out of a lie, plain enough. I looked around, and there was Bob waving his hat to us. It seems that the loss of his cattle had not hurt him any, for he had his coat off and was working with Mr. Chisholm's men. When I saw him coming I pulled out the pocket-book and waved it over my head.

CHAPTER X.

OFF FOR AUSTIN.

WHAT Bob Davenport thought when he saw me waving that pocket-book to him, I don't know. I held it extended in my left hand and tapped it with my right as if to say, "Here's your will," until he came up, and then I saw his face was whiter than it was when he thought he had lost his cattle.

"You've got it! You've got it as sure as the world!" he exclaimed, as soon as he came within speaking distance. "Is it mine?"

"Tom Mason found it for you, and it is all yours," said I. "I don't know how much there is in it, because I haven't read the will; but I heard your father say that it was all yours."

With hands that trembled Bob took the pocket-book and opened it; and as he gazed upon the hand-writing of his father now laid

away among the willows, his eyes filled with tears. Mr. Davenport, I afterward learned, had been buried near the scene of his death, and the cattlemen had made a heavy box and loaded it with stones to protect it from the wolves. Bob had not yet recovered from his father's sudden death, but Clifford Henderson was not at the funeral, and when remonstrated with by the cattlemen for his want of sympathy for the fate of his brother, said gruffly:

"Why should I want to see him buried? He drove me away from home by his ingratitude eight years ago, and I have never got over it. He seems to have one mourner there, and that is enough."

Bob Davenport, we repeat, read the will from the beginning to the end, also the letter of instructions, and we sat on our horses waiting for him to finish. When he was through he folded up the letter, closed the pocket-book, and handed it back to me.

"Why, Bob, it is yours," I said.

"No," he replied; "you fellows found it. I should never have seen it if it hadn't been

for you, and I wish you to take and hand it to Mr. Chisholm. When he says I may have it all, I will take it; not before. I left him here at the wagon when I came up."

We followed Bob back to the wagon, and there we found Mr. Chisholm, smoking as usual. He knew there was something up, for we had waited almost fifteen minutes for Bob to read the letter, but he said not a word until I rode up and gave him the pocket-book. Then he opened it and read the first line of the will, after which he folded it up and placed it in his own pocket.

"Is it all right?" he asked.

"It is all there," replied Bob. "I read the whole of it."

"Which was the lucky fellow?"

I jerked my thumb over my shoulder toward Tom Mason, and in another moment Mr. Chisholm had him from his horse.

"By George, Tommy, you did nobly!" said he, lifting Tom from the ground with one hand and giving him a grip with the other that must have brought tears of pain to his eyes. "I believe now that you found the nugget,

but I was not prepared to swallow it all when I first heard of the story."

"Course he did! Didn't he find my nugget when it had been buried out of sight longer than I can remember? Give us your grip, Tom."

We looked up, and there was Elam Storm coming around the wagon. He had his sleeves rolled up, and a person who knew him would have hesitated about shaking hands with him; but Tom took it without ceremony. There was genuine affection between the two boys, and it showed itself in the way they greeted each other.

"Now, boys," said Mr. Chisholm, who could not have been more delighted if the will he had in his possession had deeded some property to him instead of to Bob, "the next thing is something else. I wish when you start out again that you would see every cowboy that you can, and tell him to come to my wagon after supper, for I have got some things that will interest them. I promised to do some more talking to them when I got the will, and now I am in a con-

dition to do it. Tell Henderson to come along too."

"Henderson won't be here," said our spokesman.

"Ah! Skipped out, has he?"

"Yes. He said we were thieves, the last one of us, and we asked him to take it back and never show his face in our camp again. He left in a mighty hurry, and I guess he was going somewhere."

"Humph!" said Mr. Chisholm, with a sidelong glance at me. "Well, you send all the boys up here. We have something here now that will put a different look on the matter."

"Now, Bob," continued our spokesman, "we haven't had a chance before to tell you how pleased we are at your good fortune. Shake!"

"Oh, I took it for granted," said Bob, accepting the cowboys' hands, one after the other. "You have been so good to me ever since I lost my cattle that I knew you sympathized with me. I am glad to receive your congratulations."

We stood there at the wagon and saw the cowboys ride away and Elam engaged in conversation with Tom, and then I motioned to Mr. Chisholm to follow me off on one side. There were two things that I wanted to speak to him about.

"You know when Henderson read that will, do you not?" I began.

"I thought I did," he replied. "You had him cornered so that he couldn't get away or destroy it?"

"Yes, sir. He read it rapidly, much more so than I could have done if I had had the paper, and he wanted to get at the name of the bank where the money was kept on deposit—that is, where the bonds were kept. Then I interfered and the men took the paper away from him."

"Well?" said Mr. Chisholm.

"He said I was too late," I continued. "And then he gave me to understand that he had got all he wanted. He said that the next time I saw him would be in Austin——"

"W-h-e-w!" whistled Mr. Chisholm.

"Yes. And then he would have the law to

back him up. He would go to the surrogate and challenge the will. Now, it seems to me that he could make us a heap of trouble by doing that."

Mr. Chisholm knocked the ashes from his pipe and filled up for another smoke, all the while keeping his eyes fastened upon me. I knew he was thinking deeply about something, and made no attempt to interrupt him.

"Well?" said he, when he had come to some conclusion.

"And there's another thing I wanted to speak to you about," I continued. "I can't help it because Coyote Bill should be so friendly with me, can I?"

"Why—no; if you haven't done anything to make him so."

"Well, you know what Mr. Davenport told you, don't you? He thinks because I lost my cattle I am down on everybody who has not lost theirs. Now, he was one of the party who came up there to search the house."

"That doesn't matter. You couldn't have kept him away from there if he was a mind to come, and I confess I thought something was

up when Henderson came up missing the next morning."

"But I don't want to get these men down on me because he acts so. He asked me if I was going with him and help him steal cattle, and I told him I was not. He tried his best to get me interested in the matter before he made any move, but I wouldn't do it, and it was only by taking Elam into my confidence that I was able to upset him."

"Well, you just let Coyote Bill go and trust to me," said Mr. Chisholm, giving me his hand to shake. "If anybody says anything to you about it send them to me. But I don't know what to make of Henderson's going to Austin. If he should get the cattle thrown into the hands of a trustee, and have some sort of an arrangement made by which he could keep the bonds out of our grasp—— Who-pee! By George! We would be in a fix then."

"But could he do that?" I asked, alarmed at the proposition. "Just see all the writings we would have."

"He could do it if we had a thousand times

as much. He could just challenge the will, and by giving some little pettifogger money enough, and promising him as much more if succeeded, he could have it thrown into chancery and keep us out of it forever. He could do it easily enough. I never did like that man Henderson, anyway."

Of course Mr. Chisholm made things different from what they were, and anybody could see that he didn't know much about law; but it had an effect upon me, as I didn't know anything about the ins and outs of the profession. I had never had any experience in it in my life, and I was appalled by his story of what that bad man could do in the way of contesting the will if he tried. It was Bob's, and why couldn't Bob have it? In a new State like Texas, law was not considered to be of as much use as it was in some older communities, and there was but one thing I could think of to use in Henderson's case, and that was, to get him out of the way. I looked at Mr. Chisholm and could see that he was thinking of the same thing.

"There is but one way out of it," he con-

tinued, after he had thought the matter over, "and that is a revolver shot. That will end all difficulty. This thing that he has got on his side may be law, but it is not justice."

"There may be a better way than that," I added, for I was disposed to be a boy of peace, "and it won't do any harm to try it, for it will bring mischief to no one but Henderson. If we could prove that he was in cahoots with Coyote Bill——"

"Set me down for a blockhead!" exclaimed Mr. Chisholm, once more extending his hand. "But you are the very boy I want. You think of everything before I do. Of course we can prove it, for didn't you and Tom Mason see him and talk with him when he came out there to the ranch? Carlos, you be around to-night, for we are going to Austin. We'll take along sufficient men to keep Coyote Bill away from us if he sees us on the way, and go down and prove the will. Now, keep mum, for I don't want any man around here to know it. So long!"

Mr. Chisholm and I returned to the wagon, and I invited myself to the dinner which

Elam had served up in great shape for Tom Mason. Of course Bob was there and his face was radiant. I didn't exactly understand what Mr. Chisholm meant by saying that we would go down to Austin to prove the will, but I was in for it. He seemed to think there was going to be a fight before we got there, but when I looked at Bob, so joyous now when he had been so distressed and cast down when he thought he had lost all his father's property, I told myself that I was in for that too. There was one thing about it: Clifford Henderson wouldn't get those bonds, or the cattle either, by simply asking for them.

"Tom Mason is the one you want to thank for finding that pocket-book," I said, as I sat down beside him. "Elam, have you got a slice of bacon for me?"

"I know just what you both did and what you passed through when you were there," said Bob. "This is no place for me to thank you. I will do that at some future time."

For the first time it occurred to me that Bob might want to give Tom some present for being so lucky, and I was strongly in favor of

that. For myself I didn't want anything, for I had sold all my property to Uncle Ezra, who still had some of my money left in case I should happen to find him when dead broke; but Tom had suddenly taken it into his head that he must return home with the amount of money he had stolen from his uncle, and I was in favor of helping him out. When Bob got all his cattle and bonds safe to himself, that would be the time for him to act. I resolved that if he ever said anything to me, I would tell him just what I thought about it.

Between joking and laughing and driving on the wagon to meet the cowboys at nightfall, we passed the time agreeably enough. Just before dark we came within sight of a grove of post-oaks which had been selected for our encampment, and there we found a colony of wagons and almost all the cowboys. Mr. Chisholm was there. He had ridden his horse hard all the afternoon in the effort to find all the men attached to his outfit to summon them to appear at this hour, and when we got up there I found that there were two

wagons missing. Everyone was glad to see Bob. I never knew that boy had so many friends, especially when Lem and Frank came up, whom Mr. Chisholm had found herding some cattle on the furthest flanks. Of course they shook me warmly by the hand, but devoted the most of their time and attention to Tom Mason.

"I knowed you would find it, pilgrim," said Lem, holding fast to Tom with one hand and patting him on the shoulder with the other. "Whenever I lose anything I am going to send you after it."

Supper didn't take much time, for all hands were anxious to hear what was in the will, so as soon as the motions had been gone through they flocked up around the wagon to listen. The time came for Mr. Chisholm to lay by his pipe, which he did, and drew out the pocket-book.

"I reckon we'll find a little better reading in this one than we did in the last," said he, holding it up where all could see it. "Has our friend Henderson come in yet?"

Although they all knew that the culprit

was miles from there by that time, they all looked at each other, but no one spoke.

"I reckon he's skipped," continued Mr. Chisholm. "'Cause he was allowed to have the reading of these papers I hold here; and when he said we were all thieves, our friends told him to be careful how he showed his face in our camp to-night. The first paper I hold in my hand is indorsed: 'The last will and testament of Robert Davenport.' I will now read it."

Mr. Chisholm took off his hat and laid it down beside him, and in a much slower and more deliberate manner than he had used in reading the contents of the other pocket-book, the one that contained the receipts, he proceeded to read the paper he held in his hand. The testator made Robert Davenport the heir to everything he possessed, horses, cattle, and bonds, which were deposited for safe keeping in the Merchant and Cattlemen's Bank of Austin, with a few exceptions. To each of his cowboys, "for services long and faithfully rendered," he gave the sum of one thousand dollars, and then came something I was glad

to see. To his half-brother, Clifford Henderson, "to show that he had not forgotten him," he gave the sum of one dollar, and he hoped that before he got through spending it he would learn that honesty was the best policy. The will was somewhat long, and I was pleased to note one thing: the name of the bank in which the bonds were kept did not occur on the first page, but on the second! and Henderson, when reading it, had read all he wanted to see on the first page! By reading that and going off in such a hurry he tried to play a bluff game on us. He did not know the name of the bank at all!

After that followed the letter of instructions, which was so plain that anybody could have understood it, and it wound up with the entreaty to Bob to be honest; but having been brought up all his life in that way the testator did not think that Bob would depart from it. Bob told me afterward that the letter talked just as plainly as his father would to him. Bob was very much overcome, and during the reading he sat with his hands covering his face, and I could see the tears trickling

through his fingers. By the time Mr. Chisholm was through all the cowboys had their hats off. He folded up the paper and waited for somebody to make known his pleasure concerning it. It was a long time before anyone spoke. They seemed to be as much affected by the reading of the will as Bob was.

"The will seems to be all right, Mr. Judge," said the oldest cattleman at last, "and I move it be accepted by this meeting."

"Second the motion!" shouted a dozen men at once.

The motion was put and carried (we knew that Henderson didn't have a friend among those cowboys), and then the pocket-book was laid upon Bob's knee. He was a rich man at last. There were fifty good rifles to back him up, and if Henderson or any of Coyote Bill's band had been there to take exceptions to it, he would have been roughly handled. At almost any other time they would have called upon Bob for a speech, but instead of that they let him go. He passed the pocket-book back to Mr. Chisholm, with a few words expressive of his gratitude, and begged him to

keep it for him until the matter was quite settled, and arose and went off into the darkness. He wanted to be alone, and none of us intruded upon him.

Mr. Chisholm was now prepared to carry out the rest of his programme, and as soon as the cattlemen had gone away he called some of his cowboys to him and told them he wanted them to take charge of Mr. Davenport's wagon on the following morning, for he was going to Austin. He didn't enter into any explanations, for a ride of a hundred miles was nothing for their employer to undertake, but they agreed at once, and he sent them away.

"Now," said he, "the next thing is something else. All you boys who have been remembered in Mr. Davenport's will, sit up close around me, for I have something to tell you. We must go to Austin as quickly as we can, for we don't know but that man Henderson has gone there to challenge the will."

"Will you allow me to say a word right there, Mr. Chisholm?" I asked. "That man Henderson doesn't know the name of the bank in which the bonds are deposited."

"How do you know?"

"Because he read only the first page of the will. If you took pains to notice, the name doesn't occur except on the second page, and consequently he could not have seen it."

"Well, by George! I never noticed that. Did any of you boys take notice of it? But I have got the will in my pocket. We can easily satisfy ourselves on that point. It is so," he added, after referring to the will, "and you are just the boy—— But look here! If Henderson knows how, he can just go down there and challenge the will, anyway. He can say he doesn't like the way that property has been left, and so make us some trouble on account of it."

"Who will he have to go to when he challenges it?" I asked.

"Blessed if I know!"

"I'd just like to meet him to-morrow," said Frank.

"Here too," said Lem. "You wouldn't have to do all your shooting alone, I can tell you."

"But you see you aint likely to meet him,"

said Mr. Chisholm. "Now, I think we had better go to Austin right straight, in order to get the start of him. Catch up!"

"Do you mean that we are all to go?" I asked.

"Yes, I do mean all of you; everyone who is remembered in Mr. Davenport's will, and Bob and those of us who witnessed his signature. Even Elam will have to go, for he made his mark. I know the president of that bank down there, for he holds a thousand dollars or two of my money, and perhaps a word coming from me will help straighten the matter out. Lem, you and Frank get the grub together. Elam, you hunt up Bob."

And this was all the ceremony that was employed in getting under way. In a few minutes more there were ten of us, all well mounted and armed and with provisions enough to last us to Austin, who rode away from the camp. I made up my mind to one thing, and that was if Coyote Bill should discover us and try to get that pocket-book away, he would have a good time in doing it.

CHAPTER XI.

HENDERSON IN NEW BUSINESS.

"I WILL get even with you for this. Bob is not your son, and I will see that you don't adopt him, either. Whenever I see a notice of your death—and you can't live forever—I will hunt that boy up and make him know what it is to be in want, as I am at this moment."

I don't suppose that when Clifford Henderson shouted this defiance at his brother, on the day he left him, after Mr. Davenport had refused to take any further steps toward paying his debts, that he really intended to go to Texas, or, if he did, he never expected to meet Bob there. He wanted to get away by himself and think over his misfortune; for he considered it a misfortune when his brother, who was fairly rolling in wealth, should decline to advance him the small sum when he was so much in need of it. Henderson was

in sore straits—that is, for him. He had money, but he was anxious to get a little more, in order to go into a speculation in which he was certain to lose all he had; and it was when his brother declined to meet this demand that he went into a rage.

"Old Bob wants me to go to work," said he, as he turned and shook his fist at the house. "Not if I know it! I have seen him, when he was not any older than I am, looking around for a chance to put his money at interest, and he never would have anything to do with what I suggested to him. Never mind; he is 'most dead with consumption, and I will see what will become of Bob after that."

When he got a little further along the street whom should he meet but the man with whom he intended to go into the speculation. It was buying waste land on the outskirts of the city, which might some day be profitable enough, but which would take double the amount that he had to improve it.

"Well, Clifford, did you try your brother?" he exclaimed, as soon as he got

within speaking distance. "I know you have, for a fellow would not look as glum as you do who had met with any success."

"Yes, I have tried him," said Henderson, taking the opportunity to whisper a few choice swear words. "I have tried him, and he can't see it. He had but a few dollars left, and he wants to invest that for Bob. Bob! Everything is for Bob! I wish I could get rid of that boy."

"You know I told you, when he came back from the mines and brought that boy with him, that your cake was all dough," said his friend, who was about as disgusted as a man could well be. "Why did not you take my advice and put him away long ago?"

"Because I was a fool—that's why! You see I was afraid somebody would get onto it."

"They won't if you do as I tell you. But it is none of my funeral. If you can't go into the speculation I must go and hunt up somebody else. I must have some of those acres up there, for I know there is money in them. Before I would be tied down by a little boy!

Good gracious! Why don't you push him overboard?"

"I never have a chance to go fishing with him," said Henderson.

"No matter. You could make chances enough, I dare say. How does the boy feel toward you?"

"Friendly enough. I don't think old Bob has mentioned my name to him for a long time."

"Does his tutor go with him everywhere?"

"Yes, everywhere. He can't go out around the block without the tutor sticks close at his heels. If he would only send the boy to school I would have a better show."

"Do you know where the boy sleeps?"

"I bet you I do, but I don't intend to fool around there," said Henderson, growing alarmed. "He sleeps in a room opening off from the tutor's, and I tell you I wouldn't take a hand in it. That tutor is a big man and is a match for both of us."

"Could he get away with a sand-bag?" said the friend, shutting one eye and looking at Henderson with the other. "A man has

to be wide awake to meet such a thing as that."

"You may try it if you want to, and I'll give you half you make," said Henderson. "My brother is going to die in the course of a year or two, and by the end of that time I shall have money enough."

"You can if he dies without making a will; but how do you intend to get around it if he names the boy as his heir?"

"If he doesn't adopt him it is all right. I tell you that would make me mad. In that case I should probably wake up and do something, and I should find myself in jail before I was a week older."

"Not if you manage rightly. But I must go on. I must have that land before three o'clock or the fat will all be in the fire."

The friend walked away and Henderson kept on his road down the street. We can see from his conversation that he was not a bad man at heart, but he ought to have been rich, and in that case he would in a very short time have found himself penniless. His expectations ran greatly ahead of his income,

which at this time amounted to just nothing at all. All he made aside from his brother's allowance was what he gained from little speculations, and, furthermore, he was in the hands of men who generally called on him for everything they wanted, and with a fair prospect of getting it. But now that Mr. Davenport had refused him any more money,—he had told him in plain language that he would have to pay his own debts in future,—their occupation was gone, and they must look elsewhere. He sent for his clothing during the day, and took up his abode at the hotel, where he tried to make up his mind what he ought to do.

"I have my choice between two courses of action," said he, as he lighted a cigar and sat down in his room to think the matter over. "One is, to shut Bob up in a lunatic asylum; and the other is, to go fishing with him and shove him overboard. Now, if anyone can tell me which of those two is the safest, I will be ready to listen to him. Nothing else seems likely to happen to him."

The worst of it all was, Mr. Davenport

knew that something was about to happen to Bob. Almost a year before, when Mr. Davenport had refused to advance money for some of Henderson's schemes, the latter had so far forgotten himself as to make threats against Bob. It alarmed his father, who at once took Bob out of school and placed him under the protection of a private teacher, a stalwart man, a born athlete, and ready to hold his own against all the men that Henderson could bring against him. He slept, too, in a room adjoining Bob's, so that the boy was under his care night and day. And it was all done so quietly that Bob never suspected anything. Wherever he went his tutor was ready to go with him; he was a man whom he liked, and he supposed that everything was just as it should be.

"That was a bad thing for me," soliloquized Henderson, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "If I had kept still about that I might have got rid of Bob, and no one would have been the wiser for it, but now he is lost to me."

Of course his determination to push Bob overboard when he went fishing with him was

knocked in the head by this arrangement, and so was his desire to steal him away and lock him up. This last, which was the idea of the man he had left but a few minutes ago, held out brighter promises than anything else; and he had even gone so far as to engage the doctor who was to take charge of it, promising him five thousand dollars when the boy was delivered into his hands, and as much more if his object was successful. But there he stopped. Henderson didn't have the pluck to go ahead with it, and there the matter laid for over a year. Now it was brought back to him with redoubled force. Everything was going to Bob; he could see that plainly enough, and it was high time he was doing something. In fact, it had been that way ever since Mr. Davenport returned from the mines with this little nuisance, picked up none knew where.

"He must go, and that's all about it," said Henderson, rising from his chair and hurriedly pacing the room. "If he won't go overboard he must be locked up; my luck and everything else depend upon it. I will

go out now and see what Scanlan has to say about it, for I am determined that I will not put up with him any longer."

Scanlan was the friend he had left an hour or so before, and when found he didn't have the money to enable him to go on with that speculation. There were few Hendersons in the field for him to call upon, and they were as hard up as he was.

"I guess the land will have to go to somebody else," said he, as he described his ill luck. "I want just five hundred dollars, and nobody seems to have it."

"I could get it, if it were not for my brother," said Henderson; and when he spoke the word "brother" he fairly hissed it through his teeth. Scanlan looked up in surprise. "Have I forgotten to tell you that old Bob invariably speaks of that little snipe as my brother?" he continued. "He has been with him now for four years, and he thinks that I can get used to calling him by a relationship that really never existed."

"How old is the boy, anyhow?"

"Seven years old. Old Bob took him when

he was only three. I only wish the Indians had come down on them and massacred the last one of the lot. Not old Bob, of course, for I am indebted to him for a pocketful of rocks, but that young one I wish I had never seen."

"I don't see what his pocketful of rocks has got to do with you," said Scanlan.

"Neither do I. I do think," added Henderson, as though he was considering the matter for the first time, "that if I would go home and behave myself, and wait until the old man dies, I could really get hold of some of his money, but how much would I get? Not twenty thousand, and that isn't enough to buy an oyster supper."

"How much is the old man worth?"

"I don't know. A cool million."

"Whew!" whistled Scanlan. "And are you going to stay back and let that boy cheat you out of it? If you do I shall never be sorry for you."

"That's is just what I don't want to do, and I came down here to talk to you about kidnapping him and putting him under lock

and key," continued Henderson, looking all around to make sure that no one overheard him. "I say let him be locked up at once."

"Now you are talking," said Scanlan. "If you had decided on that several years ago you would have had no trouble; but now I tell you it is going to be uphill work. We've got the tutor to overcome, and that is going to be all that we two can do. Now, what do you propose?"

A long conversation followed, and the substance was that the matter was left entirely in the hands of his friend Scanlan. Henderson had never been in the habit of defying the police by engaging in any kidnapping schemes, and he did not propose to begin now. He wanted the boy got rid of, when and how he didn't care, so long as no effort was made against his life. That was too dangerous. And there, we may add, the thing rested for a whole year, until one day Henderson heard something in a few moments' talk with the tutor, who had waited outside while his pupil was in a store making some purchases, that set him post haste after Scanlan.

"The dog is dead now," said he, drawing Scanlan into a doorway where they could talk without being overheard, "and I don't know whether to be glad or sorry over it. My brother is going to Texas!"

"To Texas?" exclaimed Scanlan. "What in the world should take him into that far-off region?"

"He had a relative down there engaged in the cattle business, and he has died leaving his property to old Bob. Don't it beat the world how some fellows can get along without lifting their hands? Now, if he had left those cattle to me who stand so much in need of them——"

"If that boy goes to Texas he'll be out of reach of you," interrupted Scanlan.

"Yes; but see what danger he'll be in."

"I don't know that he will be in any danger—more than he is here," said Scanlan. "Remember that if he stays there long enough to get acquainted he will have any number of rifles to back him up."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, supposing his father dies and

leaves no will. It would put you to some trouble to prove that you are next of kin. You see your names are different. If they made up their minds that he was the heir, it would be good-by to you."

"And you believe it would be best to kidnap him very soon?" asked Henderson, his courage all leaving him.

"Certainly I do! If he goes down there you are a poor man for your lifetime. Now is the chance. I tell you I would not miss it for anything!"

This brought the matter squarely home to Henderson, and he decided that he would take that night to sleep upon it. He rolled and tossed on his bed without ever closing his eyes in slumber, and when morning came he had made up his mind to do something.

"Scanlan will have to do it all," said he, and his compressed lips showed that he had looked at the matter in all its bearings. "I will keep just behind him and show him the room where the boy sleeps, and he can throw the quilt over him and secure him without any help from me. Then if that old tutor of

his jumps in on us, why I will get out of the way. But I must leave my way of escape clear."

Henderson carried out his programme by going to the bank, drawing out his money, and depositing it somewhere about his person. Then he packed his trunk as if for a long journey, and then told Scanlan that he was ready for business.

"I knew that was the decision you would come to, so I got the carriage and made it all right with the driver," said Scanlan. "I have got an extension bit, which is about the only thing we need, to enable us to get in through the basement door. Now, Cliff, how much am I going to get for this? I do all the work and you stand by and look on. I ought to have a considerable sum for that."

"Why, I guess what I am to give the doctor——" began Henderson.

"Not much," said Scanlan, with a laugh. "What you will give the doctor won't faze me. Say a tenth of what you make."

"Oh, my goodness!" stammered Henderson.

"I have got the paper here, it is all drawn up, and I guess it is all right," continued Scanlan, drawing a folded document from his inside pocket. "Just run your eye over that."

"A hundred thousand!" gasped Henderson.

"That isn't a drop in the bucket to what you will have if you succeed," said Scanlan coolly. "You will see that the paper says 'if successful.' If you don't succeed in the job, why that is my lookout. If you do, I shall want the money. If the arrangement doesn't suit you, get somebody else to try his hand."

That was just what Henderson was afraid of, and things had gone too far for him to back out. He felt as though he was signing his death warrant when he was affixing his signature to the document, but when it was done the writing did not look much like his bold penmanship.

"So far so good," said Scanlan, coolly surveying the signature. "But you are a little nervous, Cliff. Now you keep that tutor off

me and I will get the boy. You meet me here at ten o'clock, and when morning comes that fellow will be under lock and key."

"I have done it," said Henderson, going out on the street and wending his way toward his brother's house. "I have gone too far to back out. Here I have gone and signed a paper and placed it in the hands of that man Scanlan, and he can use it on me at a moment's warning. He's a desperate fellow. I wish I felt as certain of success as he does."

Somebody has said that when a man is going to the bad he finds everything greased for the occasion; that is, he finds it easy enough to go down hill; but almost impossible for him to get back. I am not well enough posted in literature to know who it was that said it, but perhaps some of you boys who are fresh from your books may be able to name the person. Henderson found it so, and it all dated from the moment he signed that paper. He was afraid to back out now, and so he must go on. He walked by his brother's house once or twice, and then went back to his hotel. He didn't eat any supper, and he

didn't want any; but when it came near time for him to meet Scanlan he stepped into a store and bought a heavy oak stick, which he thought would be strong enough to floor the tutor or anybody else that took a hand in rescuing the boy, and pronounced himself ready for the business. There were still three hours for them to pass in some way, for Scanlan did not think it safe to make a move before one o'clock, and the time seemed to slip away before they knew it. They found the carriage right where Scanlan said they would, and in a few minutes were set down within a few doors of Mr. Davenport's house. When they got out the hack-driver thought it time to speak about his money.

"Look here!" said he; "which one of you gentlemen is a-going to pay me a hundred dollars for this trip? Kidnapping a sane person and taking him off to a lunatic asylum——"

"My dear sir, kidnapping is something we don't have any hand in at all," said Scanlan. "We are going to take this fellow out of the house with the full consent of

his father, but we don't want his aunts to know anything about it. The hundred dollars are all right. This man is a detective, and will pay you when we get the passenger to the asylum. Are you satisfied?"

The hack-driver had nothing further to say. All he wanted to know was who would give him his money when the trip was over. He mounted to his box, being instructed to keep himself within hailing distance, and the two kept on toward Mr. Davenport's residence. All was dark and silent within, except the light that was kept burning in the tutor's room.

"We have got to keep out of that," said Henderson, pointing toward the window. "If we allow ourselves to come within reach of it I shall be recognized; then good-by to me."

"Well, we must look out for that," said Scanlan, who did not feel any more fear than if he was sitting down to his supper. "Keep close beside me, and be ready to knock the tutor down if he takes a hand in the rumpus. That's all you have to do."

In a few minutes they reached the basement door, where they were free from interruption, and Scanlan, producing his extension bit, went to work in earnest. He first cut out a circular opening in the door above the bolt, then thrust his hand in and cautiously removed the fastenings, and the door swung open. They entered and Scanlan closed the door behind him.

"I think you had better leave it open," said Henderson, who trembled as if he was seized with a sudden attack of the ague. "We might be discovered."

"In that case we'll have something to light us out," said Scanlan. "But be sure you kick over the blaze before you go out."

With the words Scanlan took from his pocket a small piece of candle, which he lighted and stood upon the table, embedded in some of its own grease. Then he stopped and looked around him. The house was silent as if it had been deserted, and having satisfied himself on this point, Scanlan motioned for Henderson to lead the way up the stairs.

The steps were carpeted, and moreover, being shod with rubbers, the men gave out no sound as they ascended to the first floor, the leader easily finding and opening all doors that barred his progress. That one lock passed at the basement door had opened the way for them.

At length they came to the front hall, and here some more strategy was made use of. Henderson carefully unlocked the door and placed the key on the outside, and then cautiously led the way up the second stairs to the floor above. He stopped every once in a while to listen, but he heard nothing suspicious, and presently pushed open a door that gave entrance into the room in which the little boy was sleeping. With a motion of his hand, Henderson pointed him out, and then moved through the room to take a look at the tutor. He lay upon his back with his arms extended over his head, revealing muscles that made Henderson tremble. Something, I don't know what it was, went through the tutor all of a sudden, and he started up in alarm to find a strange face in his door

He gazed at it a moment, and then thrust his hand under his pillow. When it came out it had a revolver in its grasp. Henderson took one look at it and turned and took to his heels.

CHAPTER XII.

HE DOES NOT SUCCEED.

"HALT! Clifford Henderson, I know you!" shouted the tutor, in a stentorian voice, as he threw off the bedclothes and started on a furious race for the intruder. "I know you, and you had better halt."

He supposed, of course, that the object of his visit was robbery—and had no intention of using one of the cartridges in his revolver—until he came to his bedroom door and there saw Scanlan, who had thrown a quilt over the boy's head and started on a run after Henderson, and then he stopped as if somebody had aimed a blow at him. Then he saw that abduction was a part of Henderson's scheme, and in an instant his revolver was covering Scanlan's head.

"Put that boy back on the bed where he belongs," said the tutor.

Scanlan took one look at the revolver, and at the man who held it, and readily obeyed.

"Now throw the quilt off his head, so that he can breathe," said the tutor; and the readiness with which Scanlan complied disarmed the tutor, who lowered his revolver.

This was the move that Scanlan was waiting for. In an instant he dropped on all-fours, shot under the out-stretched hand that held the deadly weapon, caught the tutor around the legs and tumbled him over on his back. It was all done with the greatest ease, and when the tutor scrambled to his feet Scanlan had disappeared. He ran hastily to the head of the stairs, and he saw Scanlan's coat-tails vanishing as he made his way to the basement. He had tried the front door, but Henderson had gone out there and had locked the door behind him. The tutor tried the front basement door also, and in the meantime Scanlan had already gone out at that very door, not forgetting to knock over the candle in his hurried flight. That was the last they saw of Scanlan. By the time the tutor had returned to his room he found Mr. Daven-

port there, sitting on the bed and talking to Bob.

"Why, this looks like a case of abduction," said Mr. Davenport, when the tutor came in. "Did I hear you say that you recognized Clifford Henderson as one of the assailants?"

"Well, I thought it was he, but I might have been mistaken," replied the tutor, who did not want to say anything that would add to the old man's fears.

"Don't deceive me. I heard your voice plain enough, and that was what you said. Never mind, Bob. We'll soon be far enough away from him, and able to enjoy life in our own way. Now I will go back to bed. No; the men had to take themselves off without getting anything," he added, to the servants who came flocking into the room at that moment. "I wish you would find out where they got in and shut the window or door, whichever it is. Clifford Henderson! That man isn't going to let me forget him, is he?" he muttered to himself. "I must see him and tell him that if he does not leave town I shall

have him arrested. I shall remember the tutor for this."

And in the meantime where was Clifford Henderson? You know that before he went into this business he drew his money from the bank and packed his trunk for a long journey. He saw the need of it now. He never travelled faster than he did when he rushed from that door. He saw Scanlan in the act of lifting the boy from the bed after throwing the quilt about him, but did not stop to speak to him. He made for the stairs, two jumps took him to the front door, and paying no heed to the friend he had left behind in a bad scrape, he ran through and locked the door behind him. And he had heard his name mentioned, too!

"I declare I am done for now," muttered Henderson, as he took his best pace down the sidewalk, utterly forgetful that there was a carriage in waiting for him, "and the next thing will be to avoid the police that my brother sets after me. For he will arrest me as sure as I live. Scanlan will be arrested too, and there is that paper I gave him with

my name signed to it. Ow! *Ow!* Don't I wish that everybody was in danger the same as I am?"

If Henderson hadn't been so frightened that he was unable to look behind him, he would have seen Scanlan come out of the basement door and take his flight in another direction; but Henderson couldn't think of anything but the tutor's stentorian voice. "I know you and you had better halt!" It seemed to ring in his ears louder than ever the farther he got from the house, so that he increased his pace, and the first thing he knew ran slap into the arms of a policeman, who happened at that moment to come around the corner.

"Hallo, here!" cried the officer. "Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"Do you know whether or not the *Commonwealth* has sailed from this port yet?" asked Henderson.

"No, I don't!" answered the officer.

"Well, my trunk is at my hotel, already packed, and I am in haste to catch her. I hope I shall get there before she sails."

"Why don't you take a carriage?"

"I will just as soon as I get to my hotel. Which way is the Planter's House from here?"

"Go down this street to the next corner, and then go five blocks. Good luck to you!"

"That thing is done easy enough, but the next policeman that stops me will be worse," said Henderson, continuing on his way. "He'll say there is a signature waiting for you that I want you to explain, and how will I get out of it? Well, we'll wait until that time comes. I must do the best I can to escape now."

Henderson knew where the Planter's House was as well as anybody, but he followed the policeman's directions. By the time he reached his destination he was pretty well winded. He engaged a carriage at the door, paid his bill at the hotel, and saw his trunk perched up beside the driver.

"Go fast now, for I have not a minute to waste," said Henderson. "Get me down there before that steamer sails and I will give you two dollars."

In an hour more Henderson was snug in bed

and listening to the puffing of the engines which were bearing him down the river. He had taken passage on a little boat that was bound for New Orleans and had the room all to himself. In spite of his joy over his escape he could not help feeling bitter toward Scanlan. Why had he signed that paper? Scanlan would be sure to be apprehended,—he couldn't get away from that pistol,—and he would be searched at the police court, and the whole thing would come out against him.

"Never mind; he's in a bad fix" said Henderson, pounding a pillow into shape to fit his head. "And I don't know but that I am in a worse one. I hope they will send him up so that I will never see him again. And then what will my friends think?"

Filled with such thoughts as these we may readily conceive that Henderson's journey down the river was not a pleasant one, and it was only after they had left Cairo, and were fairly afloat for New Orleans, that he recovered his usual spirits. He remained in New Orleans for a single day, and then took passage for Galveston, from which place he went

to Austin. He deposited his money there in the bank, secured a second rate boarding house, and settled down to see what the fates had in store for him.

"Thank goodness, I am a free man at last!" said Henderson. "I have not heard a word from St. Louis since I left there, but I only hope Scanlan has got his just dues. And here is the place Bob was going to come. Well, I'll keep clear of him. I hope I may never hear of him again."

As the years rolled by and nothing was heard about his attempted abduction of Bob, or of Scanlan either, Henderson began to think that the matter was forgotten. By behaving himself Henderson made many friends in Texas, for it is not always the good who have blessings showered upon them except in story books. He made an honest effort at reform, and it is possible that he might have succeeded if it hadn't been for one thing. He was a speculator in cattle,—he never was known as anything else,—and he finally got into the habit of riding out on the prairie, taking no money with him, to see

what he could buy. For Texas was a new State, we had only just got through the war with Mexico, and everybody who had any wrong done him, or had got into difficulty with his fellow-man, came to Texas to begin over again. Anyone, too, who found the law too strict for him in older communities, could come here and get out of the reach of it.

On one occasion Henderson started out alone to visit some ranches he had heard of, but which seldom drove any of their cattle to market. It was just about the time the drought was commencing and Henderson was anxious to get beyond reach of it, out on the plains where water was abundant and grass plenty. If he could once reach that spot he was sure that he could make something nice out of his cattle; but the trouble was the drought spread all over that part of Texas. He was mounted on an old dilapidated horse, carried his revolver strapped around his waist, and had but three or four dollars in his pocket—not enough to pay anybody for the trouble of robbing him. But after he had been on the journey for two weeks, during

which time he met one or two parties who would just as soon rob him as not, he came to the conclusion that he had undertaken his ride for nothing. There was an abundance of cattle for sale, but the difficulty was they would not bring any more in Austin than he was willing to pay on the spot, and one day he turned around with the intention of going back, when he saw a horseman on a distant swell coming toward him. As he evidently wanted to communicate with him, Henderson rode on to meet him.

"You won't get any more than your trouble if you try to rob me," said Henderson. "I'll wait and see what he wants. Perhaps he knows of some cattle around here that I can buy."

"How-dy, pilgrim," said the horseman when he came up. "Have you been travelling fur to-day?"

"I have been out ever since daylight this morning," said Henderson. "Why do you ask?"

"'Cause I didn't know but you had seen some cattle bearing the mark of bar Y. R. as

you came along. Haven't seen any, have you? There is probably a hundred head got away from me night before last, and I can't find hide nor hair of them. They have gone off in search of grass and water. We haven't got any here to speak of."

"No, I haven't seen any, and I may as well turn around and go back. This drought extends over the whole of the country."

"Bless you, yes! We got word the other day from a ranch twenty miles the other side of us that they are packing up and getting ready to go to Trinity."

"Why, the farmers won't allow that. They will shoot the last beef you have."

"Well, it will take a right smart deal of ammunition to do that," said the horseman, with a grin. "'Cause why? there will be about seventy-five thousand head, mebbe more, that will have to be shot; and when the farmers are doing that, what do you suppose we'll be doing?"

"I suppose you will be shooting too. Do you own these cattle?"

"No; they belong to a man named Daven-

port who lives over that way about twenty miles."

"Davenport!" exclaimed Henderson, who was taken all aback.

"Them's the words I spoke, pilgrim," said the horseman, looking at Henderson in surprise. "Maybe you know the man?"

"Is he Robert Davenport?" enquired Henderson, scarcely believing that he had heard aright.

"I believe that is what they call him sometimes."

"And he's got a little boy named Bob?"

"Well, he aint so very little now. He was little when he came here, but he's growed to be right smart. Maybe you know the man?"

"Did he come here from St. Louis?"

"Look a-here, pilgrim; suppose you let me ask some questions. How do you happen to know so much about the man? He's my employer, and a mighty good man he is."

"I beg your pardon! but when I heard you speak his name I concluded that I knew him. I knew a man of that name once who was

almost dead of consumption. But of course it can't be the same one."

"Well, now, between you and me," said the cowboy, considerably mollified by this explanation, "he is as good as dead already. Sometimes, when I get up in the morning, I look around to see if he is all right, and there he is sitting on the porch. He gets up before I do."

"Bob hasn't got his tutor with him, has he?"

"His which?" asked the horseman.

"His private teacher," explained Henderson. "He used to have one sticking to his heels wherever he went."

"No; he's alone. You will ride on and see him? It is only a matter of twenty miles."

"No; I can't. I will come out and see him at some future time. My business just now——"

"Now, pilgrim, you asked a good many questions regarding that man. I want to know if he has been doing something up in the States."

"Not a thing! Not a solitary thing, I assure you."

"'Cause if he has, I won't let no man set there on his horse and tell me that," continued the horseman, growing sullen again. "He's as fair and square a man as there is."

"He hasn't been doing anything wrong. You may mention my name when you get home, and see if he doesn't back up my story."

"What did you say your name was?"

"Clifford Henderson. I can easy tell him that, because if he has let so many years go without arresting me he'll not begin now," said he to himself. "This man doesn't know where I live and I won't tell him."

"Well, if you haven't seen them cattle, I'll go," said the horseman, turning his nag about. "I'd feel a heap safer if you would go on with me—but I tell you, you would have to explain why you asked so many questions. So long!"

I may interrupt my story here long enough to say that when the horseman went home he reported his accidental meeting with Henderson, together with the questions he asked, at

which Mr. Davenport was greatly alarmed, although he tried not to show it. That very night worked a change in Bob's fortunes which he did not like. Up to this time he had been permitted to go as he pleased among the cattlemen, who all liked him and did their best to teach him, but now he was obliged to remain indoors, or at least within reach of his father's voice. His father couldn't bear to have him out of his sight. The very next day the will was drawn up; and although Mr. Davenport frequently promised himself that the first time he went to Austin he would go through the process of adopting Bob, so as to give him the whole of his money in case anything happened to him, he never got beyond the sound of his own dinner horn. It was a terrible thing for the invalid to reflect that he had brought Bob up to believe that he was his own son, and somehow he could not straighten it out.

Henderson was on nettles when he rode away from the horseman. He knew that his brother was somewhere in Texas, and he hoped he was on a cattle ranch far out of

reach of him; but the way the horseman pronounced the name fairly took his breath away.

"Of all the men that I ever expected to hear of, that Davenport is the beat!" said Henderson, throwing his reins upon his horse's neck and shoving his hands into his pockets. "I don't believe I have thought of him for six months, or if I did, I thought of him as dead, and here he has turned up when I least expected it. By George! all my desire to possess his wealth comes back to me; but how I am to get it I don't know. That boy has plenty of rifles to back him up, as Scanlan said he would."

This was the one thing of which I spoke that effectually destroyed all Henderson's idea of making a better man of himself. It was easy enough to be good when temptation was not thrown in his way, but when temptation came, he was no better than anybody else. He rode along for two hours, thinking over Bob's habits, and wondering if it would be possible for him to steal the boy away, as he had been on the point of doing in St. Louis, and not

until the sun began to set did he look around for a camping-place.

"I wish Scanlan was here now," said he. "I am sure he would be apt to think of something. There's three men," he added, shading his eyes with his hand and gazing toward a belt of post-oaks in which he intended to make his camp. "I wonder if they are good-natured, or if they mean to go through my pockets? Time will tell."

When he first discovered the three men in the timber two of them were lying down, and the other was moving about as if making preparations for supper. One saw his approach and called the attention of the others to it, and then all got up and looked at him. Evidently the men were not inclined to trust strangers, for he saw that one of them, whom he took to be spokesman, raised up without anything in his hands, while the others stood with their rifles in the hollow of their arms. Henderson thought this looked a little suspicious, but kept on and in a few minutes was close enough to the camp to accost the men.

"How do you do, strangers?" said he.

"How-dy, pilgrim," said the spokesman.

"Have you got room in your camp for another person?"

"Oh, yes! There's plenty of room round here."

"I've got some things in my haversack that may assist you in making out your supper," said Henderson.

"Well, alight and hitch," said the spokesman. "There's plenty of room for your horse here too."

Henderson dismounted and removed the saddle from his horse, the men with the rifles regarding him suspiciously. When he had thrown his saddle down by the fire, he coolly unhitched his revolver and flung it down beside it; whereupon the men with the rifles drew a long breath of relief, and deposited their weapons beside the trees where they had taken them from. Henderson noticed this, and said, as he made his lariat fast to his horse's neck:

"You seem to be on the lookout for something. I am a trader."

"Oh, you are, are you?" said the spokesman.

"Yes. And I have only got a few dollars in my pocket, so that it would be useless for anybody to think of robbing me. I came out here for the purpose of getting some cattle, but I found that the drought was ahead of me. The stock isn't worth what their hides and tallow would cost. Now," he added, having driven down his picket-pin and seated himself near the fire, "I'd like to know why all you Texans pronounce me a 'pilgrim' as soon as you see me. Is there anything about me that reminds you of the States?"

"Well, yes. The way you sit your horse is against you. A Texan does not sit bent over, with his hands on the horn of his saddle, as if he feared that the next step would pitch him overboard. And then those gloves. A Texan doesn't wear them."

"And I have been here almost eight years," said Henderson. "I guess I shall have to ride a little more in order to get accustomed to the customs of the country. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't say," returned the spokesman.

"My name is Henderson," replied the guest, who wished most heartily that he had gone somewhere else. He didn't like the way the spokesman answered his last question.

"My name is—— Which one do you want?"

"Why, the one you go by, of course."

"Well, the name that I go by just now is Coyote Bill," said the man, pushing his spurred heels a little closer to the fire. "You have heard of me, I reckon?"

Henderson was startled to hear this name. He had heard of him a good many times while in Austin, and had never expected to meet him in this unceremonious manner. He knew that he was in the power of a desperado of the worst sort.

CHAPTER XIII.

HENDERSON MEETS COYOTE BILL.

"YES, that is the name I go by now," said Coyote Bill, grinning when he saw Henderson's expression of astonishment. "What my other name is no one in this country knows. Whenever you hear that name spoken you will know what I look like. I came to this country the same as you did."

"The same as I did?" echoed Henderson, his surprise increasing. "What do you mean by that?"

"Why, you got into some trouble up there with the police and had to skip, that's what I mean. A man of your education does not come down to this country of his own free will."

"Well, that's a fact," said Henderson, breathing easy again. A desperate scheme had occurred to him, suggested by the outlaw's last words. He was wishing for Scanlan

all the time, thinking that he would be likely to propose something by which he could possess himself of his brother's wealth, and right here was the man who, by a little management, could be induced to act Scanlan's part. He would try him at any rate, but he wanted first to see how much Coyote Bill knew about him.

"Are these all the men you have in your band?" asked Henderson, at length.

"No," laughed Bill, as if the very idea amused him. "I've got one or two more scattered around on the plains somewhere."

"That means that you have thirty or forty more," said Henderson.

"Well, I've got some in Austin, and that's where they have seen you. Although I had never seen you before, I knew you the moment you hove in sight."

Again Henderson breathed easy. He knew he hadn't said anything about his kidnapping scheme in Austin, or anywhere else, that Coyote Bill could have got hold of it, and consequently Bill was just guessing at his reason for being in Texas.

"Who are those men? What did I say in their presence that led them to guess why I had come down here?"

"Oh, you said enough! I aint going to tell you just what you said, for fear that you would know those men when you get back. Is the man around here that you have got anything against?"

"I will speak to you after a while," said Henderson, turning his gaze toward the rest of the men at the fire.

"Oh, you may speak freely here! I never go into anything without their consent. It's share and share alike here. But if you would rather speak to me alone, why it is all right. Have you got supper ready?"

The man appealed to nodded, and pointed to a pile of bacon and corn bread that was waiting for them. It was such a supper as Henderson, in his St. Louis home, would have turned up his nose at, but he was ready for it now. During the meal but little was said, and Henderson, out of the corner of his eye, took a good survey of the man that everybody called Coyote Bill. He didn't look like such

a desperate fellow, by any means, and all the men who had had experience with him described him as a very different person. This proved that Bill did not always lead his bands, but gave the movement into somebody else's hands, and appeared only when out of reach of the settlers. He was as neat as a new pin, and showed by every move he made that he had been well brought up. After supper he lighted his pipe and motioned to Henderson to follow him out on the plains. When out of reach of everybody he threw himself down on the grass and invited Henderson to do the same.

"Now, then," said he, "I am ready to hear all your plans."

"I don't know that I have got any," said Henderson.

"Yes, you have," said Coyote Bill, in a tone that showed he was not in a mood to argue the matter. "A man needn't come around here with such a face as you have got on you and tell me anything like that. What was the reason you did not go on and see Davenport? I saw you talking with

a cowboy of his not more than three hours ago."

"Where were you?" asked Henderson, more astonished than ever.

"We were just behind a neighboring swell, not more than half a mile away. Your names are not alike, but still you must be some kin to Davenport. What relationship are you?"

"I am his half brother."

"That makes you next of kin, don't it? Well, now, if that man dies, who is going to inherit his property?"

"I am, if it were not for that little nuisance he has picked up somewhere. You see it was just this way."

With this introduction Henderson went on and gave Coyote Bill a full history of the boy Mr. Davenport had adopted in the mines; or rather, he intended to adopt him, but he didn't do it. He had brought him up from a little boy to think his property was all his own, giving no heed to the half brother who might want some of it.

"And when I asked him for a little money—five hundred dollars were all I

wanted—he got up on his ear and said I couldn't have it. That made me mad, I tell you, and I left his house for good."

"And never went into it again?" enquired Coyote Bill.

"Yes, I went into it once more," said Henderson, thinking he might as well tell the truth, now that he was about it. "I went in and made an effort to steal the boy. I didn't get caught at it, but my partner did, and I reckon he's serving the penalty before this time."

"What were you going to do with him?" asked Coyote Bill, and it was plain that he had a big respect for Henderson.

"I was going to put him in a lunatic asylum. I was going to keep him there until he became of age, and then get him to sign his money over to me. I tell you he would have done it before he had been there two weeks."

"And he just as sane as you are?" said Bill. "Didn't you know that the authorities would have turned—— By the way, how much is the old man worth?"

"He's worth a million of dollars. I know

that he would have turned the place upside down in the effort to find Bob, but I tell you I would have been willing to risk it."

"A million dollars! And you want to get hold of some of that money?"

"I tell you I want to get hold of all of it," said Henderson. "It is mine, and I don't see why he should want that little nuisance to cheat me out of it. The thing would be safe enough if I could get somebody to trust. I want him to go to the old man's ranch and find out where he keeps his bonds hidden. It would be no trouble at all for him to steal them."

This was all Henderson found it necessary for him to say on that subject; Coyote Bill "caught on" immediately. He understood that Henderson wanted him to go to the ranch and steal those bonds. He arose to a sitting posture and smoked audibly while he meditated.

"It seems to me that that could be easily done," said he.

"Why, I know it could! If I was as I used to be in my brother's house, I would

gain the whole thing in a week. But the trouble is I threatened him when I left. I told him that if Bob ever lived to become his heir, I would follow him up and make him know what it was to be in want as I was at that moment."

"Well, I'll try it," said Bill.

"You will?" asked Henderson, so overjoyed that he could scarcely speak plainly. "I didn't suppose that you would go there yourself, but thought that maybe you could find some man to send in your place."

"I would rather go myself, because I will know that everything has been done. You see, there isn't one man in ten who knows me. I could go there and pass myself off for a miner."

"That's the idea! The old man has been there, and you could tell him what you pleased. Have you ever been in the mines?"

"No. I am as close to them as I care to get. If I find that strategy won't work, I suppose I could put the Indians on them."

"Indians?" said Henderson.

"Certainly. I was on my way to the reser-

vation when I saw you talking to the old man's cowboy. You see, I don't find much work to do, and I am going there to rest up a bit. This drought will soon be over, and then I shall have more than I can do."

"What do you call your business, anyway?"

"Oh, stealing cattle. I take them to a little fertile spot in the Staked Plains, kill them for their hides and tallow, and give the meat to the Indians. I am chief of about a hundred men, and they will go their lengths for me."

"Well, well! I didn't know that."

"You see that I can easily get the money, or whatever it is that he is keeping from you. Now, I want to know how much I am to get for this. Say a half a million."

"I will give you half of whatever I make. Can anything be fairer than that? It may be more and it may be less than half a million."

"Yes, that's fair. Now let's go back to the fire and see what the men think of this. You had better go to bed, and we'll see how it looks in the morning."

Henderson could scarcely sleep at all that night, and when he did he awoke to find that Coyote Bill and his men were still discussing the subject. The method of stealing the bonds instead of stealing the boy promised much better than his original scheme, for he would have no hand in it. Coyote Bill would be alone in the matter, and if he should be detected and could not be prevailed upon to tell who his accomplice was—— Ah! That was something he hadn't spoken to Bill about. In the morning he would broach that subject, and tell Bill never to mention his name. If he did, all his hope of success would be gone. He finally fell asleep and awoke to find breakfast waiting for him. Bill greeted him with a good-morning, and immediately referred to their last night's conversation.

"Well, I am going to try it," said he. "I have never stolen any of Davenport's cattle, and I don't suppose there is anyone on his place who knows me."

"If you are caught, don't mention my name," said Henderson. "He knows me, and he don't expect any good of me, either."

"If you knew me, pilgrim, you wouldn't mention that at all," said Bill; and anybody could see that he was growing mad about it. "I shall not call the name of Henderson once while I am there. If anybody says anything to me about you I shall say I don't know you."

After breakfast Bill shook Henderson by the hand and started and walked away. He took nothing with him except his brace of revolvers and an old dilapidated blanket, which he slung over his shoulder. He left his rifle and horse in charge of his men, who were to bring them to him at some future time, Henderson didn't know when or where it was. Bill didn't exchange any plans with Henderson, for he had made up his mind what he wanted to do and he didn't care to have anyone know it. Henderson gazed at him in surprise as he walked away.

"There's a man who is going into trouble," said he. "I could have given him some things that I think would have helped him out."

"Don't you lose no sleep worryin' about

him," said one of the men. "He knows what he is going to do. Now you can find your way back, can't you? We have got to leave you here."

Yes, Henderson could get along now all right, and he gladly parted with the men, after dividing his corn meal and bacon with them, for he was anxious to get away by himself and think the matter over. He hadn't known what happiness was before in a long while.

"If one of the men from whom I have just parted," said he, as soon as he was out of hearing, "had told me that he was the chief of a hundred men who would go their lengths for him, I should have believed him; but that is a queer thing for that neat-looking fellow to say. How easily that villain fell in with my plans! If I had been going there knowing what he does—— Whew! I believe I should have got some advice from somebody."

Meanwhile Coyote Bill walked along toward Mr. Davenport's ranch, keeping a lookout for horsemen who were on the watch for stray

cattle, whom he intended to dodge, and revolving in his mind certain plans for stealing the bonds; for be it known that he put implicit faith in Henderson's word. No man could come to him and talk as earnestly as he did when there was nothing behind it. He tramped all that day, found a camp at night in a belt of timber with which the country was thickly interspersed, laid down without a fire, and at ten o'clock reached his destination. He was really foot-sore and weary when he got there, for walking so far was something to which he was not accustomed, and was glad to see the man for whom he was looking sitting on the porch.

"Good-day to you, sir!" said Coyote Bill, lifting his hat. "Is this Mr. Faber's ranch?"

"Come up and sit down," replied Mr. Davenport. "You have travelled far and you look completely exhausted. Faber! I don't know such a man as that. He can't have a ranch anywhere about here."

"Thank you, sir," said Bill. "I believe I am tired, and if it will suit you will sit down

for a while. May I make bold to ask for something to eat?"

"Eat? Yes, you can have all you want. Bob, hunt up the cook and get something. Have you travelled far, sir?"

"About a hundred miles, afoot and alone."

"I guess that a drink of water would help you. We haven't got much, but what we've got you are welcome to. Bob," he added, as the boy came back after seeing the cook, "scare up a drink of water for this gentleman. I speak of you, sir, as your clothes warrant me to speak. You are not a Texan. You haven't been long enough in this country to become accustomed to their way of talking. You are from the States."

"Yes, sir; from Wisconsin," said Bill, rightly concluding that Mr. Davenport would not be acquainted with anybody in that far off State. "I was engaged in doing a good business in Milwaukee, but I fell in with some fellows who were going to the mines, and there I lost what little money I had."

"Did you go to California?"

"No; to Denver."

"Then how did you happen to get way off here? This is not the road to the States."

"I know it; but I wanted to find my partner, who is in this country engaged in the cattle business."

"Well, Mr. Faber, if that's his name, hasn't got a ranch anywhere around here. The men who live beyond me are Mr. Chisholm——"

Here Mr. Davenport went off into a paroxysm of coughing, to which Bill listened with great concern pictured on his face.

"I am afraid you are talking too much," said he. "Doesn't this climate agree with your health?"

"Oh, yes! I should probably have been in my grave long ago if I had not come down here. Now, sir, your meal is ready. Will you step in and sit down to it?"

Bill thanked him, and went in to a much finer spread than he had been accustomed to while roaming with his men. He ate until he was ashamed of himself, and came out on the porch with the air of one who had enjoyed a good meal. There was one thing about it he

told himself: No matter what misfortunes his cattle might meet with, Mr. Davenport intended that those who were dependent upon him should fare the best.

"I have a little money left," said he, "and I want to know——"

"Keep your money in your pocket," returned Mr. Davenport. "When I have twenty-five thousand head of cattle to sell for a dollar apiece I can easily afford to give you something to eat. Sit down. You say you were in the mines at Denver. What sort of work are they having there?"

This was the very point that Coyote Bill had been dreading, but he had gone over it so many times since leaving Henderson in camp, that he had it at his tongue's end. He knew no more about mining than he had been able to glean from the conversation of his men, some of whom were fresh from Mexico, and perhaps he got the two pretty well mixed up. For example, he told of one mine he had been in where they had been obliged to go down twelve hundred feet before they could get gold in paying quantities. Then Mr.

Davenport began to look at him suspiciously. There might be some men at some future time that would be able to go down that distance, but there were none there now.

"I believe you are up to something," said he to himself. "But what in the world it is I don't know. I believe I will keep you here for a while and find out." Then aloud he said: "Where are you going now? If your friend isn't around here, where do you think you will find him?"

"I guess I had better go back to Austin and work around there at something until I can earn money enough to take me home," said Bill, hoping that Mr. Davenport would suggest something else to him. "Any little thing that I can do will help me along."

"How would you like to stay here and work on this ranch?"

"That would be all very well, but I can't ride. I should have to do something about the house or I shouldn't earn my money."

"You look like a man who could sit a horse."

"I know it; but they buck and jump so

that they throw me right off. When I was in the mines I devoted myself entirely to work."

"Well, I will tell you what I will do. I can find some work for you around the ranch that you can turn your hand to."

"Thank you, sir."

"It won't be much—like making the beds, for instance. Besides, you look completely exhausted. You can stay here until you somewhat recover yourself and make some enquiries among the cowboys, and perhaps you will learn something about your partner. I am determined to know what you are at," added Mr. Davenport to himself. "Can it be that you are any ways implicated with Clifford Henderson? Well, I have got my will made out, and I will see what you will do to it."

Thus it came about that Coyote Bill became an inmate of Mr. Davenport's house. When the cowboys came in at supper time he was as respectful to them as he was to Mr. Davenport, addressed them all as "sir," when he was speaking to them, and by giving them a sharp look when they came in made up his

mind that there was no one among them who recognized him. He looked them squarely in the eye when he talked to them, and listened while they told him of the men who lived beyond them. There was no Mr. Faber in the lot. He must be inside of them somewhere.

"What do you think of that fellow, Lem?" asked Frank, as the two met under the trees to smoke their evening pipe. They had left Bill in the house and he was busy at work with the dishes.

"He is here for no good, that's what I think of him," said Lem, seating himself under the nearest tree. "He has been out to Denver, and came out here to find somebody he never heard of. He never had a pardner named Faber, and what do you think of his going into a mine that extended twelve hundred feet under the ground? I tell you he has never been near Denver."

"And he can't ride!" added Frank. "I see the marks on his boots where he has had spurs on. I tell you he wants to be mighty careful how he acts around here."

"Do you mind them six-shooters he's got?"

"I do, and I aint afraid of them, nuther. I guess I can get a pistol out as quick as he can. Just keep your eye on him and we'll see what he is going to do."

The days grew into weeks and the weeks into months, and still Coyote Bill stayed around the house. In fact he didn't say a word about going since he was settled there. He seemed to think that the man he was in search of was somebody he couldn't reach, and he was content to remain where he was. Mr. Davenport kept his eye out at all times, and the only thing he found against Bill was when he caught him trying to pick his desk. He came suddenly into the room where Bill was at work, and the position he caught him in was enough to condemn him. But Bill was equal to it. He greeted him with a good-morning, and proceeded to tumble up his bed as though nothing was the matter.

"Why do you have this door shut?" enquired Mr. Davenport, with more sternness than he had ever thrown into his words. "I generally leave it open."

"I found it shut when I came in, sir," said

Bill. "I always make it a point to leave things as I find them. It's a fine day outside, sir."

"Yes, of course it is a fine day here in this country," said Mr. Davenport, who was wishing every day that it would rain. "We never see any clouds here."

Things went on in this way until we came there, and for once Mr. Davenport forgot himself and took us into his confidence. I had noticed 'Rastus Johnson, and I didn't think there was anything strange about it, except that he seemed to sympathize with me, because I had lost my cattle. But, then, that was something that fell to everybody down there, and besides I had more than made my loss good. Finally, the time came when I bearded the lion in his den, and, prompted by Elam, called him by his right name. Of course he was thunderstruck, but I think I did the best thing I could under the circumstances. He made up his mind to steal the pocket-book at once, and boldly proposed the thing to me as if I had agreed to "become one of them." I got out of it somehow, and

that was the night that he and Elam got into that "scrap." He went off, as I expected he would, and I did not see him again until he and Clifford Henderson came to the ranch to hunt up the missing pocket-book. You saw how he treated me while he was there. Tom Mason's luck came in; he found the pocket-book, and I hadn't seen Bill since. And now Henderson was gone, and I concluded that with all those men watching us we couldn't reach Austin without a fight. But we had ten good men, and they were all good shots. And I saw that others felt the same way. Well, let it come. I was sure of one of them, anyway.

CHAPTER XIV.

PROVING THE WILL.

WHEN Clifford Henderson turned his nag and galloped away from us, he was about the maddest man I ever saw mounted on horseback. When I said away from "us," I mean from the three or four men whom he had been trying to induce to buy his cattle, and Tom Mason and myself. He had good reason to be angry. He had come out to the ranch while we were there; and although he had things all his own way, and one of the men who were with him had searched us to prove that we didn't have the pocket-book, he had hardly got out of reach of the house when Tom had it in his possession. That was as neat a piece of strategy as I ever heard of, this finding the pocket-book after he had got through looking for it, and I didn't wonder that he felt sore over it. He meditated about it as he rode along, and

the more he thought about it, the more nearly overcome with rage was he.

"To think that that little snipe should have gone and found the pocket-book after I had got done looking for it—that's what bangs me!" he exclaimed, shaking his fists in the air. "No wonder they call him Lucky Tom. But there is just this much about it: the pocket-book is not going to do him any good. I'll go and see Bill about it, and then I'll go to Austin, find the surrogate before he does, and challenge the will. By that means I shall put him to some trouble before he can handle the stock as he has a mind to."

Henderson evidently knew where he was going, for he went at a tremendous rate until nearly four o'clock in the afternoon, stopping only twice at some little streams that he crossed to allow his horse time to get a drink, and then he rode into a belt of timber where he found Coyote Bill waiting for him. He had two men there with him as a body-guard. Henderson got off his horse, removed his saddle, and turned the animal loose before he said a word. Bill was watching him all the

time, and concluded that he had some bad news.

"Well," said he impatiently, "as soon as you get ready to speak let us hear from you."

"I can easily think of myself as being fooled in this way, but for a man like you, who makes his living by cheating other folks, I don't see any excuse at all for it!" said Henderson, as he threw himself on the ground beside Bill. "We have lost the pocket-book!"

"Did those boys find it?" asked the man, starting up in amazement.

"Yes, sir; they have found it! I have seen the will."

"Why, how in the name of common sense did they find it?" said Bill, who could not believe that his ears were not deceiving him. "And you have seen the will?"

"Yes, I have. Everything goes to that boy, dog-gone the luck!"

"Tell us all about it. I don't understand it."

"You know we saw them when we got to the ranch, and they found the pocket-book.

That's all I know about it. When they returned they found me trying to sell the cattle to some of the outfit, and they produced the will. I saw it and read a portion of it."

"Well, you are a pilgrim, and that's a fact. Why didn't you destroy the will? I'll bet you that if they showed me the will they would never see it again."

"Suppose there was a revolver pointed straight at your head. What would you do then?"

"You were a dunce for letting them get that way."

"Suppose there were three men, and while one of them had your head covered with a pistol, another should ride up and lay hold of your bridle? I don't reckon you would help yourself much."

"Did they have you that way? Then I beg your pardon," said Bill, extending his hand. "They didn't give you much show, did they? But you threatened them, didn't you?"

"No; I simply told them that I was next of kin and wanted to see the will. I could tell whether it was a fraud or not. I recognized

my brother's handwriting at once, but I told them it was a lie out of the whole cloth."

"And does the will make the boy his heir?"

"It does. Now I want to go to Austin and get there before Chisholm does. I can put him to some trouble before he handles that stock."

"Is Chisholm going there?"

"He must, to get the will probated."

"Then you just take my advice and keep away from Austin. Chisholm would shoot you down as soon as he would look at you. You don't know Chisholm. He's a mighty plain-spoken man when he's let alone, but you get his dander up and he's just lightning. He has got an idea that you are trying to cheat Bob out of his money and that you are a rascal. No, sir; you keep away from Chisholm."

"But what am I to do? Am I going to sit still and allow myself to be cheated? That's the way folks do things in St. Louis."

"Yes; but it isn't the way they do here. You needn't allow yourself to be cheated out of that money."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Put the Indians on him."

"The Indians?" exclaimed Henderson.

"Certainly," said Bill coolly. "What do you suppose I have got the Indians for if it isn't to help me out in a job of this kind? You said you wanted him shut up until he signed his property over to you, and I don't think you will find a better place."

"Why, my goodness, they will kill him!" said Henderson, horrified at the idea of making Bob a prisoner in the hands of those wild men.

"I'll risk it. Just put him among the Indians with the understanding that he is to remain there until he signs his property over to you, and he'll soon sign, I bet you."

Henderson was silent for a long time after this. He didn't see any other way out of it. The idea of his going to Austin and being shot by that man Chisholm was not exactly what it was cracked up to be. He knew that Chisholm would shoot if he got a fair chance, for he had already seen him behind his revolver; and he didn't care to give him another such a

chance at him. Coyote Bill gave him time to think the matter over and then said:

"Suppose the Indians do kill him; what then? It will only be just one stumbling block out of your way. What do you say?"

"Are the Indians much given to making raids on the stockmen hereabouts?" asked Henderson.

"They do it just as often as they get out of meat," answered Bill. "The only thing that has kept them from it has been the drought. They know what these white men are up to. All this country will be settled up some day, and then what will they do to get something to eat? It will be perfectly safe putting the Indians on him."

"Well, go on with it," answered Henderson. "Remember, I don't go in for lifting a hand against his life. I want him to know what it is to be in poverty. That's what I am up to."

"Well, if you find any more poverty-stricken people in the world than the Comanches are, I will give it up," said Coyote Bill, with a laugh. "Let him stay among them. I will agree to keep him safe for

twenty years. Now I will go and see what the men think about it. What do you say to that, Zeke? This is a squaw-man," he added, turning to Henderson. "The chief and all of them do just as he says."

"I say you can't find a purtier place to put a man than among the 'Manches," said Zeke, as he pulled a pipe out of his pocket and filled up for a smoke. "If you want to put him whar he'll find poverty, put him thar."

"But I am afraid to trust the Indians with him," said Henderson. "They might kill him."

"Not if the chief says 'No,' they won't. This here is our chief," he answered, waving his hand toward Coyote Bill. "We aint beholden to nobody when he says we shall go on a raid, an' I think it high time we were doin' something. It's almost sixteen months since we have seen any cattle, an' we're gettin' hungry."

"Does Sam think the same way?" said Bill.

The man appealed to nodded, and so it came about that we did not see any of Coyote Bill's

men while we were on our way to Austin. In fact there were not enough of them. It would have taken twice the number of our company to have placed their hands on that pocket-book, feeling as we did then.

I never was more shaken up than I was when I rode into Austin, but I didn't say anything about it. Accustomed as I was to travelling long distances on horseback, I must say that, when we rode up to our hotel and dismounted, I didn't have strength enough to go another mile. Chisholm was as lively as ever. He got off his horse with alacrity, looked around him and said:

"There! Two hundred miles in considerably less than forty-eight hours. I guess Henderson can't beat that. Seen anything of him around, have you?"

The men all answered in the negative.

"I wish you boys would take these horses back to the stable," said he, "and the rest of you stay by when I call you. When you come back go into the living room with the rest of the boys. Lem, you and Frank seat yourselves on the porch and keep a lookout

for Henderson. If you see him I needn't remind you that you are to pop him over."

"Oh, Mr. Chisholm!" exclaimed Bob.

"It has to be done," said Mr. Chisholm earnestly. "We have stood as much nonsense as we can. He has tried his level best to steal our money from us, and now we have got to a place where we can't be driven any further. I've got a little business of my own to attend to. Mr. Wallace, who has a thousand dollars or two of mine, is, I think, a man I can trust."

So saying Mr. Chisholm started off, and we all departed on our errands—Frank and Lem to the porch to keep a bright outlook for Henderson, the most of the men to the sitting room of the hotel to wait Mr. Chisholm's return, and us boys to take the horses to the stable. I was surprised when I saw how Bob took Mr. Chisholm's order to heart —to pop Henderson over. I declare I didn't feel so about it at all. If Henderson so far neglected his personal safety as to continue to pursue Mr. Chisholm when he was on the very eve of getting the money, why, I said,

let him take the consequences. Bob didn't say anything, but I well knew what he was thinking about. If he had had a fair opportunity he would have whispered to Henderson to keep away from the porch.

"You musn't do it, Bob," I said to him.

"Why, Carlos, I can't bear that anybody should get shot," he answered. "And then what will they do to Lem and Frank for obeying that order of Mr. Chisholm's?"

"They won't do anything to them. Mr. Chisholm is willing to take his chances. Don't you know that they never do anything to anyone who shoots a man in this country?"

When we had put the horses away we returned to the porch, and found Lem and Frank there keeping a lookout for Henderson; but I would have felt a good deal more at my ease if we had known of the interview that Henderson had held with Coyote Bill in regard to putting the Indians on Bob. We took a look at them and then went into the sitting-room to wait for Mr. Chisholm. He was gone about half an hour and then he

showed himself. He stopped to exchange a few words with Lem and Frank, and then coming into the sitting-room ordered us to "catch up!" We knew by that that he was ready for us, so we fell in two abreast and followed Mr. Chisholm down the street.

I wondered what the people in the Eastern cities would have thought of us if they had seen us marching down the street, ten of us, all with a brace of revolvers slung to our waists. The pedestrians got out of our way, and now and then some fellow, with a brace of revolvers on, would stop and look at us to see which way we were going. But we did not care for anybody. We kept close at Mr. Chisholm's heels until he turned into a narrow doorway, and led us up a creaking pair of stairs. Upon arriving at the top he threw open a door, and we found ourselves in the presence of three or four men who sat leaning back in their chairs with their heels elevated higher than their heads, having a good time all by themselves. There were a lot of papers and books scattered about, and I took it at once for a lawyer's

office. They looked at us in surprise as we entered, and one of the men took his feet down from the desk.

"Shut the door, Lem," said Mr. Chisholm. "Now, which of you men is it who proves the wills? You see," he added, turning with an air of apology to the other men in the room, "these fellows are mostly remembered in the will, and so I brought them along. I never proved a will before, and so I wanted men enough to back me up."

"That is all right," said the surrogate. "Where's the will?"

Mr. Chisholm produced his pocket-book, Bob's pocket-book, rather, the one that had taken Tom and me on a four weeks' journey into the country, and produced the papers, while the rest of us stood around and waited for him to read them. The lawyer read it in a free-and-easy manner until he came to the place where Bob was spoken of as worth half a million dollars, and then he suddenly became interested.

"Where's the man?" said he.

"Here he is, right here," said Mr. Chis-

holm. "It is a big sum of money for him to be worth, but he is big enough to carry it."

"Why, sit down, gentlemen! If you can't get chairs enough to accommodate you, sit on the table. A half a million dollars! Does anybody challenge this will?"

"Not that I know of," answered Mr. Chisholm. "It is all there, and we want it all, every bit."

"Well, I'll have it for you in half an hour," answered the lawyer. "Suppose you come in again in that time."

"No, sir! Our time is worth nothing, and if it is all the same to you, we'll have that will before we go out. When I get through here I have got to go to the bank. Take your time. We want it done up right."

Whether there was something in Mr. Chisholm's manner—there certainly was nothing in his words—that convinced the lawyer that haste was desirable, I don't know; but he got up with alacrity, went to his books, and began writing, while the rest of us disposed of ourselves in various attitudes about the room. The rest of the men went on with their con-

versation where our entrance had interrupted it,—it was something that afforded them a great deal of merriment,—and now and then the lawyer took part in it, leaving his work and coming over to where the men were sitting to make his remarks carry weight. Mr. Chisholm watched this for a long time and at last boiled over.

"See here, Mr. Lawyer," said he, and I knew by the way he spoke the words that his patience was all exhausted; "I would thank you to attend to our business first."

The lawyer was evidently a man who was not in the habit of being addressed in this way. He took a good look at Mr. Chisholm, at his revolvers, then ran his eye over the rest of us, and choking down something that appeared to be rising in his throat, he resumed his writing. After that there was no trouble. The men ceased their conversation, and the lawyer went on with his writing to such good purpose that in fifteen minutes the document was done.

"Now, who is this boy's guardian?" asked the lawyer.

"He hasn't got any that I know of," said Mr. Chisholm.

"How old are you?" he added, turning to Bob.

"Sixteen," was the reply.

"Then you must have a guardian," said the lawyer. "Hold on, now," he continued, when he saw Mr. Chisholm's eye begin to flash and his hand to reach toward his pistol. "This guardian is a man who can exercise much or little control over this property. He can say you shall or you shall not spend your money for such particular things; but all the while the boy can go on and do as he pleases. It does not amount to anything."

"Is that paper all ready for his signature?" asked Mr. Chisholm.

"It is all ready for the signature of his guardian," said the lawyer. "But I tell you it won't amount to anything so long as he has no one on it to act as his guardian. Why don't you sign it, sir? You seem to be on good terms with him."

Mr. Chisholm did not know what to say, and so he looked around at us for a solution.

But the men all shook their heads and looked down at the floor. They didn't want anyone to act as Bob's guardian, but would rather that he should spend the money as he pleased. Finally Bob came to the rescue.

"I will sign it with Mr. Chisholm, but with no one else," said he. "This lawyer knows more than we do."

"And won't you never ask my consent toward spending your money?"

"No, sir; I never will."

"Then I will sign it. Remember, Bob, there aint to be any foolishness about this."

Mr. Chisholm took the pen from the lawyer's hand and signed his name in bold characters, and although there was no occasion for Bob's signature in a legal point of view, the lawyer was afraid to object to it, for there were too many pistols in the party.

"There, now; it is all right, and you're master of that money," said Mr. Chisholm, drawing a long breath of relief. "Nobody can get it away from us now. How much?"

"Ten dollars," said the lawyer.

As Bob didn't have any money, Henderson

having taken all he had, Mr. Chisholm counted out the ten dollars, after which he held out his hand for the will. There was where he made another mistake. The surrogate kept that will upon file, and then there was no chance of its being lost, and anyone, years hence, if there happened to be any legal points with regard to the disposition of this property, could have the will to refer to. But Mr. Chisholm didn't know that.

"I will take that document if you have got through with it," said he.

"The will?" said the lawyer. "As soon as you go away I shall lock it up. Then it will be safe."

"You will, eh?"

In an instant his revolver was out and covering the lawyer's head. The other men sprang to their feet, but before they could make a move they were held in check by four revolvers held in the hands of our own party.

"I have just about submitted to all the nonsense I can stand with regard to this will," said Mr. Chisholm, in stern tones. "You made me sign it as a guardeen when I aint got

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no business to, and now you want to go and take the will away from us. Hand over that document! One—two——"

"There it is, and you can take it," said the lawyer, turning white. "But I tell you it won't amount to anything as long as you have it in your hands. There's the notice of probate. You can take that down to the bank with you, and that is all you want."

"He is right, Mr. Chisholm," said Bob, who seemed to keep all his wits about him.

"Has he a right to take the will away from us?" demanded Mr. Chisholm, in a stentorian voice.

"I have got wills here that were left by parties long before you ever came to this country," said the lawyer, turning to his safe.

"Not by a long sight you haven't," said Mr. Chisholm. "I want you to understand that I have been in this country long before you ever came out of a pettifogger's office in the North. You can't take that will away, and that's all about it."

"Here is Jerry Wolfe's," said the lawyer, taking from his safe a big bundle of papers all

neatly endorsed as he had filed them away. "You knew him, didn't you?"

"Well—yes; and a right smart business man he was. Did his guardeen leave his papers here?"

"His executor did, and that amounts to the same thing. And all those in there are wills."

"That may be law, but it isn't justice," said Mr. Chisholm, putting up his revolver and stepping back; whereupon the men in his party, who held their pistols in their hands, let down the hammers and returned them to their cases. "Have you got done with us?"

"Yes, sir; we are all through."

"Well, if you are right, I am sorry I pulled my revolver on you; if you are wrong, I'm sorry I didn't use it. You see, I never had any experience before in proving wills, and I never want to have another, unless I can have someone at my back who knows more than I do."

"I assure you, it is all right," said the lawyer; and, to show that he was in earnest, he cordially shook hands with Mr. Chisholm.

"You go down to the bank, and if Mr. Wallace doesn't say that it is all right, I'll make it so."

I, for one, was glad to get out of reach of that surrogate's office. There was too much pulling of revolvers to suit me. I fell in behind Mr. Chisholm, who led the way toward the bank.

CHAPTER XV.

TOM GETS SOME MONEY.

I HAVE often quoted our leader as saying that Mr. Wallace was a man whom he could afford to trust, seeing that he had the handling of a thousand dollars or two of his money. In point of fact, he had more than that. He had two hundred thousand dollars of money in his hands that Mr. Chisholm's signature was good for—not banknotes, for they were not as good then as they are now, but specie; and when a man put specie in the bank, he always wanted to get the same when he signed a check. The bank was not a great way off, and in a few minutes we were standing in the presence of the cashier.

"Is Mr. Wallace in?" asked Mr. Chisholm, gazing over the heads of three or four men who had come there to do business.

"Step right into his private office," said the cashier. "He is waiting for you."

The private office was a little room that opened off the rear of the bank, and when we filed in you couldn't have gotten another man in edgeways. Mr. Wallace was engaged with some papers, but laid them all down when he heard our big boots clattering on the floor.

"Hallo, Chisholm!" said he. "Well, you found 'em, didn't you? Are these men all remembered in the will? Where's the boy? Sit down."

"I don't see much chance to sit down here," said Mr. Chisholm, looking around. "But, if it suits you just as well, I won't sit. Most of these men are remembered in the will, and some of 'em aint. I brought 'em along with me so as to give me plenty of backing. This thing of probating wills aint what it's cracked up to be."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Mr. Wallace.

"We found that little surrogate like you was telling me of, and he won't let me have the will. Said he would lock it up, and it would be safe."

"That's all right. Supposing you should

die to-morrow and the will should fall into the hands of some dishonest person. Where would you be? The will is there, and anybody can get a copy of it; but nobody can touch the will itself."

"Oh, ah! That's the way the thing stands," said Mr. Chisholm, and I thought he felt a little sheepish over the way he had acted in the surrogate's office. "Then I was wrong and he was right. But then," he added, a bright idea striking him, "he made me sign it as guardeen. I had no business to do that."

"How old is the boy? Sixteen? Well, of course he had to have somebody, and he thought you would do. Where is the boy? I haven't congratulated him yet."

"Here he is, right here," said Mr. Chisholm, seizing Bob by the arm and pushing him forward. "He is a pretty fellow to have a guardeen, is he not? He knows more about taking care of his money than I do."

Bob blushed like a school-girl when he was pushed out into view, but he returned the pressure of Mr. Wallace's hand, and promptly

accepted the seat that was given to him. The president then went on to tell Bob that he had nearly seven hundred thousand dollars' worth of bonds and stocks, and about forty thousand dollars in specie; did he want some of it?

"Yes, sir. I should like about ten thousand dollars."

"All right. Mr. Chisholm, will you sign for that?"

"No, sir, I won't," said Mr. Chisholm, frightened at the amount. "You said you wouldn't ask me how to spend your money."

"Bob can't get it without you sign it," said Mr. Wallace. "I will make out the check and you'll sign it, of course. You are not going to kick, the first thing!"

Mr. Chisholm looked around to see what the rest of us thought about it, but none of us had anything to say. Mr. Wallace wrote out the check, and then motioned to Mr. Chisholm to take his chair and sign it; and our leader obeyed without a word of protest. Mr. Wallace then went out of his private office, and in a few moments returned with his arms

filled with bags containing bright new gold pieces.

"I'll count them out for you if you want me to," said he, "but then the whole sum is right here and the bags are sealed. What do you want of such an amount of money, any way? You can't spend it out there on the ranch."

"No, sir. But some of these men have been remembered in father's will, and I want to pay them up."

"Oh!" said Mr. Wallace. "Well, then, what's the reason you can't pay them right here? It will make a less load for you to carry."

"Now, Mr. Wallace, I have got something to say about that," said Mr. Chisholm. "Not one cent do you give the men so long as we are in the reach of bug-juice. I want them to go home with me as straight as when they came away."

"All right. What shall we do with this money?"

Mr. Chisholm immediately stepped forward, and under his supervision the money was

equally distributed so that each had an equal weight to carry, but I noticed that Lem and Frank didn't get any of it. They were the ones who were much too fond of "bug-juice." They winked at me, but said nothing.

"Now, Mr. Wallace, I am done with probating wills," said Mr. Chisholm. "You made me sign as guardeen for a boy that is as well able to take care of his money as I am, and put my name to checks for which I am not at all responsible, and I don't like your way of doing business."

"Don't you want some money yourself?"

"No, sir, not a red cent. The drought is over now——"

"This has been fearful weather, hasn't it?" asked Mr. Wallace, anxious to get Mr. Chisholm off on his favorite topic.

"Fearful! You follow the dead cattle that we left behind while on our trip to the West Fork of Trinity, and you can go straight to my house. We left a trifle of over three million dollars on the plains, and that's a heap of money to come out of poor men's pockets. I wish you good-day, sir."

We all touched our hats to Mr. Wallace and went out of his private office, and I drew a long breath of relief. There had been no shooting done, and I was glad of it. I was hurrying ahead to get to Mr. Chisholm's side, to ask him if that order in regard to "popping him over"—that is to say, Henderson—was still in force, when I saw Frank seize Bob by the arm and pull him back. I stayed back with him, for I wanted to see how the thing was coming out. I fell in with Tom Mason right ahead of Bob and Elam, and Lem and Frank brought up the rear. This was the way in which we marched down, and Mr. Chisholm couldn't raise any objections to it. After we had got fairly under way, I heard Frank say to Bob, in a scarcely audible whisper:

"Say, you wouldn't mind lending Lem and me a twenty, would you?"

"I should be glad to, but the bag is sealed up," replied Bob.

"Sh! don't let Mr. Chisholm know it. You couldn't get the seal off'n the bag, could you? Lem and me is mighty thirsty."

Bob put his hand into his pocket, and I could hardly keep from laughing outright when I saw the contortions his face went through in order to get the seal off the bag. He worked as a boy never worked before, and at last I saw, by the expression on his countenance, that he had got the bag open. We were pretty near to the hotel when this happened. I heard the chinking of the pieces as Bob drew his hand out and placed two twenty dollars in Frank's extended palm.

"Boys, I will give you that to pay you for sticking by me," said he. "Now, be careful, and don't take too much."

"You're right; we'll stick by you," said Frank. "If you ever get in a scrape like this again, send us word. We'll not take too much. We are afraid of Mr. Chisholm."

They had got the money, and the next thing was to get the whiskey. Mr. Chisholm thought he was smart, and, no doubt, he was in some things; but he had to deal with men who were as smart as he was. When we got back to the hotel, Frank and Lem threw themselves into the chairs they had occupied before,

to keep a lookout for Henderson; but Mr. Chisholm spoke a word or two to them, and they got up and went into the house.

"Now, landlord, catch up," said Mr. Chisholm. "Can you get us an early supper? We want to be away from here in an hour."

The landlord was all attention. He was in and out of the bar a good many times, but Lem and Frank never went near it. They had a good deal of time to spend in looking at the pictures; I saw a half a dozen men talking to them, and finally they came back to where we were, and sat down. I winked at Lem, and he winked back at me, and so I knew he had got it; but how in the world he *got* it was a mystery to me. I did not see him put anything into his pocket; but, after we had eaten supper and were about an hour on our journey homeward, I saw the effects of it very perceptibly. It did not make Lem and Frank loud and boisterous, as they generally were when they were full, but "funny"—all except when Mr. Chisholm came back and scowled at them, and then they were as sober as judges. The next day, however, they were all right;

but when Bob saw Frank stoop down and fill his hat four times at a stream he was passing, and drink it empty each time, he said:

"I am sorry I gave you that money yesterday. You had by far too much."

"I know it," said Frank. "But with stuff like this, one can drink all he wants to, and it won't go to his head. But we had a good fill-up on account of your success, and there wasn't any shooting done, as I was afraid there was going to be."

"Shooting! I should think not."

"Well, now, I was afraid there was going to be. When Mr. Chisholm was passing that little stream yesterday, and reached down and filled his hat, as you saw me doing, it was all I could do to keep Lem from shooting that hat away from his mouth."

"Why, how far off was he?" enquired Bob, who had never heard of such a thing as that.

"We were a hundred yards or so behind him."

"Why, the old villain! He might have missed the hat, and struck Mr. Chisholm through the face."

"That was just what I was afraid he was going to do, although I have seen Lem, when he was perfectly sober, put all his bullets into the same hole at that distance. But he is not a villain, by any means," said Frank earnestly. "It shows what a man will do when he gets too much old rye in him."

I tell you I believed it, and I swore off on whiskey then and there. And I have kept my pledge from that day to this.

Lem and Frank being all right and having no Henderson to look out for, we were longer going than we were coming, and it took us six days to overtake our cattle, which were being driven slowly toward their respective ranches. We went a little out of our way to enable Bob to visit his father's grave, and stood around with our hats in our hands while Bob's eyes, his face suffused with tears, gazed upon the scene he never was to see again. I supposed, of course, that Bob, having been admitted by all hands to be the heir of that property, would be allowed to rest in peace; but I did not know Henderson and Coyote Bill. They persecuted him from the word go, and it was

to end only with his leaving the country. The cattle were getting fat now, the full moon was close at hand, and the Mexicans and Indians were waking up. I heard the men talking about it as we rode along, and only wished I could be there to see some of it; but I tell you one raid by the Comanches fairly took that all out of me.

On the evening of the sixth day after leaving Austin we came up with the cowboys, who were camped in a belt of post-oaks, and long before we got up to them we found that they had discovered us. Everyone wanted to know how Bob had prospered, and when Mr. Chisholm told them he had been successful in spite of the surrogate's efforts to cheat him out of it, you ought to have heard that belt of post-oaks resound with their cheers. Now that he had time to think it over, Mr. Chisholm still regarded the efforts of the surrogate to keep the will as a fraud, notwithstanding what President Wallace had told him.

"Aint he just as likely to die as I am?" he demanded. "And can't that Henderson go there and get that will? I tell you I think it

would have been safer in my own hands than his. But I am done probating wills now. The next time anybody dies he can get somebody else."

At last we arrived at our ranch and found everything there just as we had left it. The cowboys gazed in surprise at the result of Tom's search, for you will remember that he threw the things in the middle of the floor and had not had time to replace them. Then Tom showed them the stick he had used in unearthing the pocket-book and the very spot where he had dug it out. There weren't ashes there enough to conceal it from anybody who had tried hard to find it. I could see that Bob was very grateful to Tom for what he had done, and consequently I was prepared for what he had to say to me afterward.

It was two weeks before we got our cattle all rounded out and driven off by themselves where we could take a look at them. There were not more than five thousand head, all the rest that Mr. Davenport had owned having been left on the prairie as a prey to the

wolves. He must have lost as many as ten thousand head, which amounted to a considerable sum. But I ought to say that, long before this happened, Bob had brought all his cowboys together and paid them the money that had been left to them in his father's will. It made less weight for him to carry, and, besides, he wanted it off his mind. I wish I could put it on paper, the scene he had with Mr. Chisholm, who positively refused to pay the money. It raised a roar of laughter, which made the old man so mad that it was all he could do to keep from pulling his pistol; but Bob got around him at last, and finally he gave in.

"If it is as you say—that you want some disinterested party to pay them so that they won't believe that they have been cheated—why, I will do it," said he, seizing the nearest bag of gold and emptying it upon the table. "But you promised that there should be no foolishness about this. Now, boys, watch me, and see that I don't make any mistake. Frank, you come first. I've got an all night's job before me."

But in an hour they were all paid, and not one of the men had a chance to tell Mr. Chisholm that he had made a mistake. They received it reverently, for their minds were with the man whose liberality had made so great a change in their fortunes. It was more money than they had ever had before in their lives.

Shortly after that—the very next day it happened—Bob said to me in a whisper that he wanted to see me when all the cowboys had gone to the round-up, so I stayed behind. Elam had charge of the cooking now, for I had almost forgotten to say that the Mexican had discharged himself when we drew near to the waters of the west fork of Trinity. He heard that there was going to be a fight, and so took himself safe out of reach of it. But then we didn't care for Elam; he had been Bob's friend all the way through, and we were not afraid to trust him.

"Say, Carlos, I hardly know how to speak to you about this," said Bob, looking down at the floor. "You say Tom Mason's friends are rich?"

"Well, I know what you have on your mind, and I'll tell you just what I think about it," said I. "You know Tom got into serious trouble where he lived, and he has somehow got it into his head that if he can go home with five thousand dollars, that trouble will never come up again. How much truth there is in it I don't know."

"I know all about his troubles, but he ought not to let them prey so heavily on his mind. Now, how much has he got left?"

"I think if you give him three thousand dollars he will be all right."

"That is what I think, too," said Elam. "He don't belong in this country."

"I know he don't. He wants to get up the States, where quail and black squirrels are handy, and have some more fights with 'Our Fellows.' On the whole I think the scenes he passed through with those robbers are more exciting than the scenes he passed through here. If he can get a letter from his uncle, stating that those things have been forgotten, he'll go back."

"Well, I shan't stay in his way," said Bob.

"You think three thousand dollars are all he needs? I'll see him this morning. If he wants more he can have it."

"You wouldn't have found your pocket-book if it hadn't been for him," said I. "He reminded me of a dog on a blind scent. He poked around till he found it."

This was all that was necessary for Bob to know, and during that day I saw him several times during the round-up talking with Tom; but Tom insisted that he didn't want anything. About the time that night came, however, and the cowboys came in tired and hungry, Bob tipped me a wink, and I followed him behind one of the wagons out of sight.

"I took him right where he lived," whispered Bob. "I told him he could go back to his uncle, who was all the time worrying about him, with more money than he had stolen, and he agreed to take time to think it over."

"He took it, didn't he?" I asked.

"Yes, and it was all he needed. I shall be sorry to part with Tom, but then home is the place for him."

So it was settled that Tom Mason was to leave us as soon as he could get a letter to his uncle. We had always treated Tom as one of the family, but somehow we got into the habit of treating him better than usual. But time went on and we didn't see anybody who was going into Austin to take a letter for him. Meanwhile, we had bidden good-by to Mr. Chisholm and all his friends, and were fairly settled down to our business again. But there was one thing that was different from what it was during Mr. Davenport's lifetime. Lem and Frank stayed about the ranch now entirely. Bob hadn't got over his experience with Henderson and Coyote Bill; in fact, Mr. Chisholm was the one who recommended him to keep them always near him, and Bob intended that, if they came to his house, he would give them as good as they sent.

Things went on this way, we repeat, when one day that Frank was busy with some story of his cowboy's life, we heard a terrible clatter of horses' hoofs approaching the house. Frank and Lem were on hand in an instant, and, with their revolvers in their

hands, went out to see what was the matter, but there was no sign of Henderson or Coyote Bill in the men who drew up at the door. Two of them were soldiers and the other a civilian, and their appearance indicated that they had been through something of a fight. One of the soldiers' heads was all bloody, in spite of the handkerchief that had been bound around it, and the horse of the civilian seemed ready to drop from a wound in his side.

"What's up? Indians?" demanded Frank.

"Yes, and they're most here," returned the civilian. "Can you give us a bite to eat and change our horses for us?"

"Indians!" repeated Bob. "Come in and sit down. You can have all the horses you want. But Indians!" he added with a shudder. "In all the eight years we have been in this part of the country we have never known them to come so far South before."

"Well, you will hear them coming now if you stay here," said one of the soldiers. "You had better catch up and go with us."

"Why, how did you manage to get on to

them, anyway?" I asked, for like the rest I had been so overcome with astonishment that I could not say anything. "You look as though you have been in a hard fight."

"You may safely say that, and the way they went about it satisfies me that there were some white men bossing the job," said the soldier. "You see there were twenty-five of us detailed to act as guard to our paymaster, who had a lot of money—I don't know how much—to pay off the men at Fort Worth. We were going safely along through a pass, within a day's journey of the fort, when they jumped on us. I tell you I never saw bullets fly so thick before."

"Did they kill almost all the guard at one fire?" asked Bob.

"They got about half of us, and where the rest are now I don't know. Some got through to the fort probably, and the rest of us, being cut off, had to save ourselves the best way we could."

"Lem, you and Frank bring up a horse for each of us," said Bob suddenly. His face was pale, but I saw that he had his wits about

him. "You may turn the rest loose, for we have all got to go now. I wish those boys who were out with the stock had warning."

"I'll go and tell them," said Frank.

"No, you had better stay by me," said Bob. "If there are some white men bossing this, I think you will have all you can do. Suppose Coyote Bill is among them?"

"By George! I believe you're right," said Lem.

He jumped off the porch, and in company with Frank went out to the corral to catch the horses that were to carry us safely out of reach of the Comanches. Bob had found a cloth and was tying up the soldier's head; Elam was skirmishing around the house trying to find something to eat; the other soldier was filling up on water, of which he had long been deprived; and the balance were busy gathering up their weapons. For myself, I was thinking over a certain proposition that had suddenly suggested itself to me. It was a dangerous thing, I knew; but I didn't see who else was to do it.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RAID BY THE COMANCHES.

THE thing I was revolving in my own mind was this: Should I go all by myself and warn the boys who were herding cattle on the plains, and so run the risk of being captured or shot by the Comanches, or should I stay with Bob and go with him to a place of safety? For I knew that Lem and Frank would exert themselves to take him safely out of reach of danger, while I could not say that for myself. I would be going right back the way the Indians were coming, and to be captured—that is what I was afraid of, for I had seen men who were taken prisoners by the savages, and I knew what was in store for me. But those boys had stood by us when we were in danger and were willing to do so again. While I was thinking about it my horse was brought up. He was a small sorrel, who had brought me in safety through many perilous places, and he

was lithe and vigorous yet. I did not see but that, if I got out on the prairie with two or there Indians after me, I could make a good run yet, and perhaps be able to overtake my party before they had got very far away. My mind was made up. Those boys would not have deserted me, and why should I desert them? I put my saddle on him, slipped on my bridle, and threw the lariat off his neck. Then I buckled my revolvers about my waist, picked up my rifle, and mounted.

"Good-by, boys," said I.

"Why, where are you going?" demanded Bob. "We're all going off in a minute."

"I am going out to warn the boys," said I. "I think I will overtake you after a while."

"You mustn't go!" exclaimed Tom. "You will be certain to be captured, and you know better than we can tell you what they will do to you."

"I know it perfectly well. But I have no kith or kin to worry their heads about me, and I can go as well as anybody. I know right where they are——"

"But you have got to go along the road

that the Indians are coming," said the civilian, who was utterly astounded by my proposition.

"I know that too, but somebody must go, or leave those fellows to be killed. Come and shake hands with me, boys, and let me go."

"You are a brave lad, and I hope you will come out all right," said Frank, as the boys came up one after the other. Elam and Tom didn't have a word to say, but they were badly cut up. Bob's eyes were filled with tears, and he clung to me with both hands.

"Carlos, I am sorry that you have come to this decision," said he. "Why can't somebody else go? You have been with me so long that you are like a brother to me."

"The best of brothers must part some time or other," said I. "If I fall nobody will be the wiser for it, except you fellows right around here. Good-by, everybody," I cried, and with a circular sweep of my arm to include all hands, I wheeled my horse and started on my lonely journey. "There are some fellows who will be sorry if anything happens to me," I soliloquized. "During the time I have been

with them I have never made anybody mad, and that's a heap to say for a man who has been to Texas. Now the next thing for me is to look out for myself."

In spite of all this delay, occasioned by asking and answering so many questions, not more than five minutes elapsed before I was on my way to warn the cowboys. One learns to think rapidly when living on the frontier, and while we talked we worked. In a few minutes I was beyond reach of the grove, and taking my horse well in hand rode forward at about half pace, and in half an hour more this grove was out of sight behind the swells and the last glimpse of the ranch had disappeared. I was alone on the prairie, and a feeling of depression I had never before experienced came over me. I kept my horse at half pace because I didn't know how soon he would be called upon to exert himself to the utmost, and I did not want to ride a wearied nag in my struggle for life. The horse knew that there was something going on, for he kept his eyes and ears constantly on the alert, and having more faith in him

than I had in myself, I watched him closely. I was certain that he would smell an Indian long before I could see him.

At the end of another half hour I began to wonder why I did not see some signs of the cowboys, but there was nothing in sight. Nothing, did I say? Away off to the left loomed up a body which was lying in the grass. I couldn't tell whether it was a beef or a horse, for it was about half a mile away. My horse discovered it at the same time and snorted loudly.

"There is something over there as sure as you are a foot high," said I to myself, looking all around to see what sort of a place I was going to get in. I didn't like the appearance of things where that body lay. On all sides of it, except the one by which I entered, was a ravine, and it was so deep that I could just see the tops of the willows growing up out of it—a splendid place indeed for an ambuscade. I didn't want to go in there, and that was the long and short of it. "I must go in there and see what that is," said I, after taking note of

all these little things. "It may be something that will tell me of the fate of the cowboys."

If my horse had refused to go in there I believe I should have ridden back to the ranch and never thought that I was guilty of cowardice; but he didn't. When I called on him to go ahead he went, but he did not seem to be holding his course toward the dead beef or horse I have spoken of, but turned a little to the right as if he were seeking evidence a little further on. Wondering what there was that my horse had in his mind, I humored him, and in a few minutes was horror-stricken at the scene he brought me to. There, flat on his back, stripped, scalped, his head beaten in by a stone or some other blunt instrument, and mutilated beyond description, lay Sam Noble, one of our cowboys. Where the other two were I didn't know, nor did I waste any time looking for them. I shall never forget it as long as I live. He had evidently been killed before he was captured, which was a lucky thing for Sam.

As soon as I could recover my breath I

KILLED BY THE INDIANS.

pulled my horse about and took the back trail with long jumps, but before my horse had made half a dozen leaps I saw that I was captured. Three Indians came riding out of the ravine on my left, and scarcely had they been discovered, when three or four more came from the ravine on my right. What was I to do? I had heard that when a white man was surrounded by Indians, if he would raise his gun in the act of shooting, every Indian would at once get behind his horse. I don't know why that came into my mind, but I tried it then and there, and in an instant two of the Indians were out of sight. They had gone down on the other side of their horses, so that I had nothing but a leg and a small portion of the head to shoot at. The third Indian, however, retained his upright position, and, holding up his bare hand to me, shouted:

"Don't shoot! We're friends."

You can imagine what my feelings were as I sat there and listened to those words. They were my friends, and yet Sam Noble had been killed that very morning in the

effort to escape from them! While I held my rifle in my hands and sat there debating the question, the Indians came quite close to me, too late to escape, and I yielded to them like one in a dream. I was able to tell now what savages looked like in their war-paint; and although they were hideous enough before, you can't conceive what a difference those streaks of red and yellow paint made in their appearance. They looked just awful. The white man was the only one among them that was not painted, and I felt more like surrendering my weapons to him than I did to any of his savage crew. But I didn't get the chance. The first one who held out his hand for my rifle was an Indian, and I readily gave it up to him. The other Indian seized my horse by the bridle, and the white man, after securing my revolvers and buckling them around his own waist, open my shirt and felt all around for the belt that contained my money; but he couldn't find it.

"Where is it?" said he, with something that sounded like an oath.

"Where is what?" I asked, for I had by this time recovered my wits. I had no idea what would happen to me afterward, but I knew that so long as I behaved myself with them I need not stand in fear of bodily harm.

"The belt," replied the man. "You didn't bring it with you?"

"It is hidden at the ranch," I replied. "We thought that somebody might try to take it away from us."

"Well, we will have to go after it, and you will have to show us where it is," said the man. "But first I must take you down here to show you to somebody here who is anxious to see you."

"To show me to somebody?" I exclaimed, lost in wonder, as the redskin who held my horse turned me around. I wasn't terrified any longer. My fright had given place to something that was stronger than fear, and I was amazed at the words the man said. "Somebody" wanted to see me, and I wondered who that somebody could be. Could it be Coyote Bill? If it was, I was on nettles. He would propose to me to "become

one of them," and when I refused, what would happen to me? I resolved to follow that matter up a little.

"Yes, sir; there's a man that wants to see you," said he. "He has got a name around here that you don't want to know too much about, too."

"Know too much about him? Why, I know about him already. Is it Coyote Bill?"

The man seemed surprised that I spoke his name so readily. He looked at me as though he hardly knew what to say.

"How did you learn what his name was?" he asked at length.

"One of my chums guessed it," I replied. "Anybody who knows anything about Coyote Bill would know that he didn't come on that ranch for nothing."

The man said no more, but I was satisfied from the little he did say that I was right in my conjectures. There was another thing that was strange to me, and the longer I thought of it the more bewildered I became. This white man had been to school,

had received the benefits of an education, and how did it come that he was there among the Indians? There was something strange about him and Coyote Bill, and I wanted to get at the bottom of it, but I may add that I never did. I took a good look at the man who rode by my side, and I didn't see anything more desperate about him than I had seen about Coyote Bill. Take his weapons and buckskin suit away from him, and dress him up in fine clothing, and he would have passed for a business man anywhere.

There was another thing that worried me as I rode along. I wondered if any such capture had ever been made by hostile Indians before. The savages paid no more attention to me than if I was one of themselves, but seemed to have given me up entirely to the white man. As soon as we got through the willows and came out on the prairie again, we rode along in single file, the white man just ahead and the others bringing up the rear, so escape was simply impossible. I knew I must see that "somebody" who was so anxious to

see me, and I nerved myself for the test. I had nothing to fear until I saw him.

"Can these Indians speak English?" I asked, at length.

"No," replied the white man. "You can say what you please and they won't tell on you."

"Well, the question I should like to have you answer is, How in the world you ever came out here among them?" said I. "You have been to school and don't talk as these Texans generally do."

"No, I have been to school; that's a fact," said the man, after hesitating a little.

"What sent you down here?"

"Look here, my friend," said the man, turning around in his saddle and looking at me with his snapping gray eyes; "I didn't agree to take you into my confidence."

He used the very same words to me that Coyote Bill had used when I asked him the same question; and he didn't seem to be angry about it, either.

"What made you think anything brought me down here?" he asked. "What brought you down here?"

"I came to buy cattle, but the drought had got in ahead of me and I thought I would wait until it was over. Hallo! What's the matter with you?"

"You came down here to buy cattle?" exclaimed the man, looking at me with an expression of great astonishment on his face.

"Yes, sir, I did; and there are two other boys in my party. But what surprises you so greatly?"

"Then your name isn't Bob Davenport?"

I said it was not, but I didn't tell him what my name was. I knew Bob very well, and had left him at the ranch that morning. I didn't say, however, that he was making hurried preparations for flight, for I thought that was something the man could find out for himself. The man listened in amazement, and, when I got through, uttered a string of oaths.

"Set me down for a blockhead, and you'll hit it," he said, as soon as he could speak. "I might have known that you were not the fellow."

"Did you calculate to capture Bob?" I

enquired, and my astonishment and delight were so strong that it was all I could do to repress them. That is what I meant when I said that Henderson and Coyote Bill began persecuting Bob at once on account of his wealth, and did not intend to let up on him until he had been driven from the country. I saw through the whole scheme at once. They intended to keep Bob a prisoner among the Indians until he was ready to do just as they wanted him to do, and that would be to sign his property over to Henderson. It didn't look to me as though that plan would work, but Henderson evidently knew some way to get around it.

"Why, of course I intended to capture Bob Davenport," said the man, and it was plain enough to see that what I had said made him very angry. "What use are you to me? If I had known that you were not Bob I wouldn't have taken you prisoner."

"What would you have done to me?"

"You saw that man up there that was shot from his horse, didn't you?" said he, in a very significant tone of voice. "Well, you

would have been that way now. I could make mince-meat of you in two minutes!" he added fiercely. "There's timber right ahead, and the redskins are just aching to get their hands on you. But then you are a brave boy; I will say that much for you. It isn't everyone who would go on and talk so when he found himself a prisoner among hostile Indians. I'll wait until I see what Coyote Bill will have to say about you."

I tell you I was afraid of this, and my only hope of salvation lay with Coyote Bill. I rode along in silence after that and never had anything more to say. I knew what the man meant when he referred to the timber right ahead. All that was needed for him was to tell the Indians that his protection for me was withdrawn, and in two minutes I would have been stripped and staked out, and a fire burning at one of my feet. All that stood in his way of saying that was Coyote Bill.

"I do know something that I want to tell Bill," I said.

"Very well, then keep it for him," an-

swered the man. "I don't want to talk to you any more."

All that day and until far into the night I rode along without seeing a living soul, never once stopping to give our horses a bite to eat, and then I suddenly became aware that we were in the camp of Indians. While we were going along a redskin sprang up on our right and addressed a few words to us in his native tongue, and then sank out of sight again. He was one of the sentries who were out to watch the cattle and see that they didn't stampede. We kept on and in a few minutes reached the timber. There was no one in sight, and no preparations made for supper, and I felt about half-starved.

"You can take off your saddle and bridle and camp here under this tree," said the man. "Let your horse go where he is a mind to."

So saying he rode off, accompanied by all the Indians save two, whom he left to act as my guards. As I felt tired and discouraged, too, it did not take me long to comply with the white man's orders, and when I removed the saddle from the horse I judged by the

way he shook himself and went to cropping the grass beneath his feet, that he was as hungry as I was. While I was thus engaged the Indians bustled about, and when I had thrown myself on the ground, with my saddle for a pillow, I found that they had a little fire kindled ; a very little fire, over which a white man would freeze to death, but they sat around it and warmed their hands with evident satisfaction. But not a word was said about supper, and I began to think I should have to go hungry to bed, when I heard the twigs cracking out in the timber, and in a few minutes up came the white man, accompanied by Henderson and Coyote Bill. I wasn't so surprised to see Henderson there as a good many people might think. He was with Coyote Bill, and of course he was bound to take up with Bill's companionship.

"Well, well, Carlos ; how are you?" said Bill ; and to show that he was in a humorous mood, he backed toward a little mound of earth, sat down upon it, and laughed uproariously.

"How do you do?" said I, taking a few

steps toward Bill and extending my hand ; for I thought, if I could lead the man to shake hands with me, I would be all right.

"No, I don't want to shake hands with you," said he. "The Indians are on the watch, and they take that as a sign of friendship. But what in the world induced you to come out? Why didn't you stay at the ranch? You have got yourself in a pretty fix!"

"I say give him a dose of lead," muttered Henderson, who was almost overcome with rage. "I'll have him out of my way, at any rate."

"That's enough out of you," said Coyote Bill. "Such things are only done here when I say the word."

"Hasn't that boy been in my way ever since I have been here?" exclaimed Henderson. "Didn't he go out to the ranch and find that pocket-book?"

I was astonished to hear Henderson talk that way. He had been growing worse instead of better ; but, after all, when I came to consider the matter, I didn't see that there was

anything so very surprising about it. Some writer has said that if we don't grow better we grow worse, and that was what was the matter with Henderson. One of the first things he spoke of in regard to Bob was, that no finger should be lifted against his life; and here he was going to shoot me who hadn't done anything to him.

"He got the pocket-book because we were not fortunate enough to look where it was," said Coyote Bill. "Now, Henderson, I don't want to hear another word out of you. You are under my protection now, but the minute I withdraw it—well, you know what will happen."

"You asked what should be done with that boy," said Henderson. "Well, I have told you."

"But I didn't think you would propose any fool thing like that," said Bill. "I must first take Carlos back to the house with me. You know where all that money is kept hidden, I suppose?"

"Why, yes, I know where it is," I answered, considerably surprised. To think

that any man in his sober senses would go off and leave his money behind him, was ridiculous. I looked at Coyote Bill to see if he meant what he said, but it was so dark that I couldn't see the expression of his face; but Henderson evidently knew what he was speaking about when he said, in a voice choked with passion:

"You are going to lay a plan for him to escape. I wish I could talk to these Indians, for then I could let them see what you are up to!"

"What I choose to do is nothing to you!" said Bill, as he turned fiercely upon Henderson. "Once more, and for the last time, I ask you to keep still. How did you find out that we were coming, any way?" he added, addressing himself to me.

"There were three men came along who had plainly been in some sort of a fight," said I. "We wanted to know what the trouble was, and they told us."

"Ah, yes! Did they tell you about the mule that got away from us?"

"I don't know what mule you mean."

"We got all the money except five thousand dollars, and that was supposed to be packed on a mule that lit out. He was shot three or four times, but I never saw anything run as he did."

"And did he escape?"

"Well, I should say so. He took right down toward your ranch, too, and I didn't know but you had seen him there."

"And yet, in the face of all this——"

Henderson didn't say any more, for Coyote Bill turned around and looked at him. He thought his companion was in earnest when he told him to keep still.

"I didn't know but that it would be a good chance for lucky Tom to try his hand on that mule," said Coyote Bill, with a smile. "He has been lucky in finding one pocketbook, and he might be equally lucky in this."

"He will go down among those rich cattlemen and be captured," said Henderson bitterly. "The men who don't care a cent for those five thousand dollars will have just that much more to jingle in their pockets; while

we, who are hard up for the money—dog-gone the luck! it is so the world over."

Coyote Bill laughed again.

"I don't see anything so very laughable about this matter," said Henderson. "You laughed because we got the wrong boy——"

"That will do," said Bill. "You are getting off on your old subject, and I won't sit here and be abused. Haven't had any supper yet, have you, Carlos?"

"No, I haven't; and I feel as though I could do justice to some corn bread and bacon."

"Well, then, come with me."

Turning to the Indians, he addressed some words to them in their native tongue,—it sounded like gibberish to me,—and started at once into the woods, while I picked up my saddle and bridle and followed behind him.

CHAPTER XVII.

MY FRIEND THE OUTLAW.

"WELL, this bangs me completely," thought I, as I shouldered my bundle and stumbled along behind my leader through the darkness. "But I would like to know if any white man has ever been captured before by hostile Indians and treated in this way. Coyote Bill seems to have the power in his own hands, doesn't he? I tell you, he *is* a power in this land, and if he will let me get away from him this time, he'll never see me again. I'll go for the States the very first chance I get."

Bill seemed to know just how fast I could go to keep up with him, and in a few minutes I saw a light shining through between the trees, and presently I was ushered into his camp. There were three or four men lying around the fire, and they started up and looked at us.

"We have caught the wrong boy," said Bill, waving his hand to show that I could put my saddle and bridle down where I pleased; "but he has got to show us the place where that money is hidden before he gets away. He hasn't had anything to eat, and is hungry."

I sat down and looked at the men, and, I tell you, some of them were pretty rough characters. I was glad indeed that I had fallen into the power of Bill's best looking man, for if I had been captured by any one of the men sitting there at the fire, I should have fared badly. They expressed a sentiment of strong disgust when Bill spoke of having captured the wrong boy, but no attention was paid to it. He proceeded to fill a long pipe very carefully, after which he went off into the darkness, while another man set before me some bacon and corn bread. It was not enough to satisfy my appetite, but I was glad to get what there was, and in a short time it had all disappeared. Then I filled my pipe and settled back for a smoke.

"Where do you suppose Bill is gone?" I

asked, addressing my enquiries to whoever had a mind to answer it.

Henderson was there, and in forming this question I looked particularly hard at him, not because I wished him to reply to it, but because I wished to see how he took matters. He was as mad as he was in camp when Mr. Chisholm found that he had got hold of the pocket-book containing the receipts, and not hold of the one that contained the will.

"He has gone off to get permission of the chief to burn you at sunrise," said he spitefully.

"Sho!" said I, for I knew that Henderson had made this all up out of his own head. "Then he won't get the money."

"That's the only thing that makes me think he won't do it," said Henderson. "But you will be gone up the next time you come here. How did you know that we were after the money, anyway?"

I repeated what I had said to Bill, and that was nothing but the truth.

"There were three white men in the party, and they said, from the way you went about

it, they were satisfied that there were some renegades bossing the job," answered I; and then I was almost sorry I said it. I did not know how they would take the name "renegades," as applied to themselves; but Henderson was the only one who understood it.

"And what made us renegades?" he asked, and I believed that the presence of the men was all that kept him from doing something desperate. "We killed almost all the guards at the first fire—I got two of them, I know, and I wish we had got them all. Renegades! That is a vile and worthless fellow," he added, turning to the men who were sitting around. "That's the kind of men you be."

Some of the men laughed, while others acted as though they didn't care what men's opinions were of them so long as they were permitted to enjoy themselves. I saw that Henderson was trying to work the men up to do something to me before Coyote Bill could get back, and I didn't think any more of him for it.

"Thar is one thing about that attack that I shall always be sorry for," said one of the

fierce-looking men. "You know I, for one, had occasion to look out for the muels that had the specie onto them. Tony here got the man, an' I shot the muel through the neck. I could swear to that. Well, that thar muel turned an' run like he never run before, an' got away with the Injuns completely. He took right down by your ranch too. Didn't see nothing of him, I reckon, did you?"

I shook my head.

"Well, thar's a kind of a lucky feller down your way, I don't know what his name is, who has a mighty fine chance of findin' pocket-books when everybody else is done lookin' for them, an' I didn't know but what he might try his hand at findin' that muel with five thousand dollars in specie strapped onto him. That would be a pretty good haul for him, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, it would," I replied. "But he would have to give it up to the paymaster."

"Oh, he would, would he?" exclaimed the fierce-looking man. "If he found it, it would be his'n, wouldn't it?"

"You needn't look for those boys to do

anything like that," said Henderson, with a sneer. "They would give it up to the paymaster and get five hundred dollars for it. It is a big thing to be honest!"

"Well, I think we've made as much as you have by being honest," said I. "You don't seem to be loaded down with money."

"But I would have had half a million if it hadn't been for you and others like you," muttered Henderson between his clenched teeth.

"You had all the chance in the world," I replied. "No one came near you when you were searching that house. You see luck wasn't on your side."

"What did you come here for anyhow?" asked one of the men. "Folks say that you came here to buy cattle, but I'll be switched if I don't believe you came here to help Davenport. You aint got no money to buy cattle."

This started us off on a new topic of conversation, but Henderson seemed to find fault with everything I said. I couldn't reply to a single question but it would start some spite-

ful remark on his part. I really did not see how the men stood it. Finally Coyote Bill came back, and I noticed that his pipe was empty. He had smoked it out with the chief in gaining his point, and I wanted to hear him say that he had obtained permission to torture me at sunrise; but he said nothing of the kind, so that was one lie of Henderson's nailed.

"Carlos, you had better go to sleep," were the first words he spoke. "We have got a long ride before us in the morning, and you won't feel a bit like getting up."

"You want to watch him close for fear that he will escape," chimed in Henderson, who could not possibly let a chance go without saying something.

"He won't escape. He won't try to; will you, Carlos?" continued Bill, turning to me.

"Not much," I said. "Where shall I lie down so that I will not be in the way?"

Bill selected a place, and picking up my saddle and bridle—I do not know what made me hang on to them, for I did not suppose I would be allowed to ride my own horse in the

morning—and with a cheery "Good-night, fellows; pleasant dreams," I laid down on it. The majority of the men never paid any attention to my salutation. Bill was the only one who noticed it, and he said: "Thank you; the same to you," and that made me think more than ever that he had been well brought up.

"That's a brave fellow," I heard him say as I arranged my saddle for a pillow and laid down with my back to the fire. "It would be a great pity if anything should happen to him."

"And you are going to give him a chance to escape in the morning," growled Henderson. "I wish to goodness——"

"Go to bed," said Coyote Bill, in his ordinary tone of voice.

"I wish to goodness that you, or any fellow like you," began Henderson, "had sense enough to see——"

"Go to bed!" said Bill, and in an instant his revolver was out and was looking Henderson squarely in the eyes. This was the third time that Henderson had been placed in a

similar situation, but on this occasion he didn't say anything back. He knew that Bill was in just the right mood to shoot. He gathered up his saddle and blanket,—I didn't have any blanket to cover myself with, and the nights were getting cold,—and that was the last I saw of him that night.

"I made it," said Bill, as soon as Henderson was out of hearing. "I smoked a pipe with the chief, and he came over to my way of thinking. Jack, you will ride down to the house with us in the morning."

"But look here, Bill," said the man who had done most of the talking with me. "Don't you think those boys would be some kin to the biggest kind of dunces if they went off to escape from the hostiles, an' left their plunder buried where you could find it? That's what's been running in my head ever since you went out to see the chief."

"No, I don't think so," replied Bill. "They went off in a hurry, did they not, and forgot to take some of their things with them. We have made thirty thousand dollars this trip, and that is something worth having."

"Yes, an' that dog-gone muel got away from us. I expect that lucky feller at the ranch will have him."

"Well, we can't help that. And if I don't find the money this time, I have got something else in store for Bob. I'll pounce on him every chance, and steal his cattle by piece-meal, until he is driven from the country. And I wish to goodness that he had never come into it."

"Here, too! I don't believe there was any half a million dollars wrapped up in his hide."

"Oh, yes! there was. But we can't touch it now. Those men have been to Austin and got the will probated——"

"What do you mean by that?"

"They have been to Austin and got it proved, and the property is all in Bob's name. What we would have done if we had captured Bob in the place of this Carlos, I don't know. Henderson thinks he could have got Bob to sign the money over to him, but what good would it have done? They'd say right away that we had gained the signature by fraud, and

then we would have a war on our hands, I bet you. As it is, we can keep on stealing cattle; we will have a few Rangers to whip, and that's all it will amount to. I am going to bed."

I do not know that I was in any condition to produce sleep, surrounded as I was by men who had talked with satisfaction of seeing me tortured at sunrise; but it is a fact that, as soon as Coyote Bill sought his blankets, I sank into an untroubled slumber, from which I was awakened by Bill's shaking me and ordering me to catch up. I started up, only to find that somebody had thrown a blanket over me while I was asleep, and to see that the camp of Indians was gone, and that there was no one in sight except Coyote Bill, his man Gentleman Jack,—I did not know what else to call him,—and Henderson.

"They have all gone away with the cattle," said Bill, noting my feelings of surprise. "You wouldn't have us stay around here with eight hundred head of stock to be captured, would you? They have gone off to the Staked Plains."

I noticed while Coyote Bill was talking that

the guns were scattered all around, and you will, no doubt, wonder that I did not catch one of them up and turn the tables on them. There was a price of five thousand dollars set upon the head of Coyote Bill, and it would have been a fine thing for me to march them all in as prisoners, but I knew a story worth two of that. One was, I didn't know how many pistols Bill had about his person; another was, there might be some men in camp a short distance away who would up-end me before I fairly got the gun pointed; and furthermore, I was firmly convinced that if I did just as I was told to do, my release would come in good time, and without the necessity of shedding anybody's blood. I tell you it stands a fellow well in hand to take all these points into consideration.

Breakfast over—and we ate it in a hurry, everyone being obliged to cook his bacon on a forked stick over the coals—there was nothing left for us to do but get under way. According to Bill's order, I picked up my saddle and followed him through the woods to the prairie, and there I found my horse tied up to

a brush. I was glad to see him again, and when I got on him he was all ready for a race. During the whole of that day we travelled without scarcely exchanging a word, but I noticed that at the top of every swell the outlaws stopped and carefully examined the ground before them. But no one was in sight, and finally, just as the sun was setting, we came within sight of Bob's ranch. There was no one about it, not even a steer or a horse. I saw that Bill carried my weapons about with him, and I thought that now was his time to hand them to me, but Bill had different ideas in his own mind.

"Appearances are often deceptive," said he. "Carlos, suppose you ride on and see if there is anybody about that house. If you don't find anybody, wave your hat to us."

"Anybody can see that he has a fine chance for escape," snarled Henderson, who was as mad now as he had been the night before. "I wish I had your power!"

"What would you do with it?" asked Coyote Bill.

"I would let him feel one of the bullets in

my pistol," said Henderson. "You won't get anything out of that ranch as long as you let him escape. He heard every word you said last night."

"Did you, Carlos?"

"Yes, sir; I did," said I. I thought I might as well tell the truth as tell a lie. My heart was in my mouth, but I looked Bill squarely in the eye.

"Well, I want to know if you are going to tell it?"

"If you tell me not to, I shan't. I won't say anything about it while you are around. I shall go for the States as soon as I can get there, and Tom will go with me."

"That will suit me exactly. I am satisfied. Now, go on and see if you can find anything around that ranch."

Coyote Bill touched his hat—I have thought more than once from the way he saluted that he had been in the army—and I rode off. Some things, which I had gone over so many times that I had them by heart, promptly came back to me. I wondered if any man who was captured by hostile Indians was ever

treated that way before. What Coyote Bill saw about me; whether he thought there was something that reminded him of other and happier days, I don't know. Anyhow, he had saved me from a horrible death, and for that I was grateful. I don't believe there was another man in the world that could have done it. My horse neighed shrilly as he approached the house, but there was no one who came out to answer him. I kept on till I got to the porch, and there I found the door open and everything in the greatest confusion. The ranch looked almost as bad as it did when Tom Mason got through searching for the lost pocket-book, only the things were not all piled in the same place. I got off from my horse and went in. Bob Davenport's pillow was on the floor, but the heavy bag of gold which he had left after paying off his men was gone. I looked in the place where my money was hidden and found that it was gone, too. Bob hadn't left in such a hurry that he had forgotten to take his valuables with him. I knew that Coyote Bill was depending on something he never could find, but

then I freely forgave him. It was a plan of his to aid me in my escape. When I had fully satisfied myself that the money had been taken, I went out on the porch and waved my hat to Bill, and then I went into the grove to look where Sam Noble had concealed his, but that also had been taken away. Poor Sam! He would never miss his money now. And I wondered what had become of the other two cowboys. I didn't like to enquire about it.

"It is gone, is it?" exclaimed Bill, who at that moment came galloping up. "Well, we have had our trouble for our pains. How do things look in the house?"

"You can go in and see, but everything that will be of use to you has been removed," said I. "Are you going to burn the house?"

"Burn it? What should I want to burn it for? I want Bob to come back here and live."

"And you are mighty foolish for telling me of it," said I to myself. "I will never let him stay in this house again. That's one thing that I didn't promise to keep to myself."

Coyote Bill tossed his reins to his man and went in, but he did not spend much time in looking around. It was plain to him that no money could be concealed there, and finally he came out, took my rifle off his back and handed it to me.

"There you are," said he, "and I want you to understand that the gun hasn't been fired since you gave it up. There's your revolvers. Now buckle them around your waist, so that I can see how you look."

I wondered what Bill was thinking of when he did this, but I took the belt and put it around my waist where it belonged, and looked up for the man to tell what else he had on his mind.

"Now, Henderson, you're even," said Bill. "You said, if you had the power, you'd make him taste one of the bullets in your pistol. Now go ahead."

I turned toward Henderson, and saw that his right hand was fumbling with the pistol in his holster. A minute more and he would have me covered with it. I looked toward Bill to see what he thought about it.

"You're even," said he, stepping back a pace or two. "You have got more weapons than he has."

I saw the point Coyote Bill was trying to get at, and in a second I had Henderson's head covered with one of my revolvers.

"Hands up!" said I hotly; and his hands came up.

"Bill, I didn't think that of you," said Henderson, who was fairly beside himself with rage.

"You told me that all you wanted was to get the power in your hands," said Bill. "Now you have it, and I don't see why you don't use it. Be quick!"

I kept my eyes fastened upon Henderson, and, fearing that Bill's taunts might lead him to do something wrong, for which he would always be sorry,—for there was a good deal of derision in what Bill said, and it showed what a high estimation he had of Henderson's courage,—I held my revolver in readiness for a shot, and stepped forward and took his gun from its holster and handed it to Bill. The latter took it with an expression of great dis-

gust on his face, looked at it a moment, and sent it as far out on the prairie as his sinewy arm could throw it.

"I don't see what your object is in shooting me, who haven't done you any harm," I said, addressing myself to Henderson, "but I tell you not to attempt anything with that rifle. If you do, I will tumble you off your saddle!"

"Henderson will not attempt to shoot us with that," said Bill. "If he does he will have three of us to contend with, and I think that is rather more than he can manage. Now, Henderson, go for Austin as soon as you can get there."

"And give up my share of those thirty thousand dollars?" exclaimed Henderson, his astonishment getting the better of his alarm. "Now, Bill, that isn't right!"

Almost before Henderson had got through with these words of protest, Bill's hand laid hold of his revolver, while with the other he pointed out the direction he was to follow. I noticed that Jack's revolver came out also—he had been sitting in his saddle all this time—and rested across the horn, directly in range

with Henderson's person. He saw that everything was up with him, and without saying a word turned his horse and rode away; and I may add that was the last I ever saw of Henderson. We went to Austin a short time afterward, and, although we kept a bright lookout for him, not a thing did we see of him. Whatever became of him I don't know.

"Well, Carlos, so-long," said Bill, when Henderson had ridden away out of hearing. "I hope you will reach the States in safety. Put it there."

"Are you going to leave me here?" said I, overjoyed.

"Yes, I reckon we might as well. What do you say, Jack?"

"Let the kid go. He's a brave lad," returned Jack.

"Now, Bill," said I, as I took the outlaw's hand in mine, "I want to say something, if I thought you would not take it to heart."

"No preaching, now!" said Bill, with a laugh.

"No, I won't preach. Why do you do this?"

"Well, that's preaching, and I didn't agree to answer every one of your questions."

"You see something about me that reminds you of days when you did not do this way," said I. "That person don't know where you are, and——"

"That's neither here nor there," said Bill impatiently. "So-long, Carlos. Come on, Jack."

Jack reached down from his saddle in order to give me a good shake, and then clattered off up the prairie after Bill. I stood and watched them for a long time, but neither of them looked around, and finally the nearest swell hid them from sight. There was something good about that man, and I never heard of him afterward. Probably he lost his life in some of his numerous raiding expeditions. But there was one thing about it: He left one boy behind who was sorry for him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN Coyote Bill and Jack had disappeared, and a glance in the direction Henderson had gone showed me that he also had vanished, I began to think about myself. I was alone on the prairie, but I didn't care for that as much as I did for the safety of Bob Davenport and the men who had gone away with him. I staked out my horse, and while I was thinking about it, it occurred to me that now was the time to find Henderson's revolver. I had taken particular notice of where it fell; and after half an hour's looking I had the satisfaction of securing the weapon which had so nearly been the cause of my death. It was silver-mounted, of forty-five calibre, just big enough to take the cartridges intended for his rifle, and on the trigger-guard bore the name of its luckless owner, Clifford Henderson.

"Good!" said I, taking my steps back

toward the ranch. "As often as I look at it I shall remember him, and if Bob doesn't want it, I will always keep it. Let's see what effect this bullet would have had upon me."

Sitting on a tree close by was a robin—I knew that the weather was getting cold up North, for the birds had already come down to us—and I tried the bullet on the robin from where I stood, and saw him come down without his head. If Clifford Henderson was as good a shot as I was, he could not well have missed me at that distance.

The next thing was to find something to eat, and then came a pipe, during which I thought the matter over. There was one thing on which I had long ago made up my mind, even before separating from Coyote Bill, and that was that Bob Davenport should not be permitted to stay in that ranch any longer than I could help. Coyote Bill was determined to have that money or drive him from the country. I gained this much from the conversation that Bill had had with some of his men, and how was I to prevent it? I was going to the States, and I was resolved that Bob should go

too. I was getting sick and tired of so much pistol-drawing, I did not want to see any more of it, and I would get back among civilized men. There was where I belonged, anyway. And Tom Mason, he must go along too, and relieve the suspense which I knew his aged relative would feel at not hearing from him in so long. He did not know but Tom was dead, and a letter would go far to cheer him up. But how should I go to work upon Bob and Tom and so get them out on the water, where I could tell them everything? Well, there was another day coming, and I would see how it looked after I had slept on it.

The next day passed and still another, and in the meantime I employed myself in bringing order out of the confusion in the ranch and making it look as though somebody lived there, and not a sign did I see of the returning Bob Davenport. I began to think something had happened to them. I did not dare to go out to look for them, for I might run across some men belonging to Coyote Bill's band, who wouldn't treat me half as well as their leader did, so I thought I had best stay right

where I was. On the evening of the sixth day, when I had got so worked up that I didn't think I could stand it any longer, I was startled out of a year's growth by seeing a body of horsemen approaching the ranch.

"Is that Henderson?" I exclaimed, feeling the cold chills creep all over me. "If it is, he has brought men enough with him to complete his work. I will give them as good as I have got."

I rushed into the house, and when I came out my rifle was in my hands and my revolvers strapped around my waist. The horsemen had by this time approached near the ranch, and I could make out that one of them was Bob Davenport. How I cheered and yelled at them! An answering yell came in response, and in a few minutes I was shaking my friends by the hand. I never hoped to see them looking so well; there wasn't one of them that had been hurt. To repeat the questions that were propounded to me were impossible, but in a few minutes I gave them to understand that I had escaped from the enemy all right, that I had seen the place where Sam

Noble had been knocked in the head, and that I had stayed around outside the ranch for two days before I mustered up courage enough to return to it. Oh, what a lie that was! But it served my purpose very well, and besides I told Bill that I wouldn't repeat what he said about Bob, where it would do him any harm. When I got him away I could tell him my story. Did I do wrong in keeping the promise I made to an outlaw? Remember he was the man who had placed me where I was that day. If that man had withdrawn his protection from me I would have died an agonizing death.

"Well, you have had a time of it!" said Bob, who pulled up a chair and seated himself beside me. "We have been to Austin twice, and Tom got a letter off to his uncle."

"Good enough!" said I, feeling that a big load had been removed from my shoulders. "Tom, you and I will go to the States together."

"Are you going, too?" exclaimed Bob. "Well, I am going, and that will make three. Elam, here, thinks he can't go."

In fact I hadn't looked toward Elam, but I looked at him now, and his face was as long as you please. He didn't like it when his friends were talking of going away and leaving him.

"And that isn't all," continued Bob. "You know that those soldiers who came by here before you left told us that the savages had made an attack on the paymaster, and made an attempt to secure the thirty-five thousand dollars which he was taking to pay off the garrison at Fort Worth. They tried to shoot the mules, and they got all of them except one, and he ran most all the way to Austin."

"Didn't they catch him?" I asked; and I felt that I was going to hear something thrilling. Bill's men had spoken of this a time or two, and predicted that Tom's luck would stand him well in hand if he was disposed to look for this mule, too, but somehow I didn't pay much attention to them; but now I knew that Tom had had a finger in this also. That fellow just beat the world for finding things!

"Has Tom found it?" I continued, so amazed that I could hardly speak.

"Yes, sir! Tom has found it," said Bob. "We heard about it when we were in Austin, but we had so many other things to think of that we hardly thought of it again; but on our way home we ran across the mule in a little grove of post-oaks."

"Dead, was he?"

"As dead as a door-nail. But we found the specie all right, and we took it back to Austin, and gave it to a paymaster there. You see the paymaster that had charge of the money was killed in the fight. We told him that we wanted a thousand dollars for giving it up, and he said he would write on to Washington and see what they said about it."

"I don't want anything for it," said Tom.

"That's what he tried to say when he was in the presence of the paymaster," said Bob. "The United States is worth more than he is, and I resolved that he should have that amount of money. That was fair, wasn't it? We'll stop and get it when we go back."

"Of course it was. But, Bob, what put it into your head to go up to the States?"

"Well, I think I will be safer there than I will anywhere else," said Bob. "Those fellows were after my money, I can see that plainly enough, and I will take it and put it in some bank out of their reach. Perhaps then they will let me alone. I have given all my cattle to Lem and Frank to keep for me until I come back. You don't see many cattle around here, do you?"

I confessed that I had not seen a head of stock since I came to the ranch, and that was six days ago. But I knew where they were. Those that had escaped the clutches of the savages were mixed up with Mr. Chisholm's cattle, and it would be a week's job to get them out.

"I am glad you have decided to go, and I didn't know how I was going to talk it into you," said I. "You will have to see Mr. Chisholm first. He is your guardian, you know. But what are you going to do with Elam? He must be provided for."

"He has hired him out to Lem and me," said Frank.

I looked at Elam, and he didn't seem to be at all satisfied with the change. He sat with his elbows resting on his knees and his eyes fastened on the floor. Bob got up, moved his chair close to his side, and threw his arm over Elam's shoulder.

"If this doesn't suit you, say the word, and you will go North with me," said he. "Our people up there will be glad to see you."

"No, I can't do it," said Elam. "I'd see so many broadcloth fellers up there that I'd want to get away an' hide in a belt of post-oaks. I don't belong up there, anyway."

"But, Elam, I am coming back."

"Well, when you come back, I'll talk to you. Now, go away an' let me alone. I can bear it best by myself."

To make a long story short—for we lost no time in getting out of Texas—we made up our minds to start for Mr. Chisholm's bright and early the next morning. It would take us two days to get there. Bob had all my money, as well as the funds belonging to the

cowboys, and we knew that they were safe. I said nothing about my coming back to search for the hidden valuables in the hope of turning them over to Coyote Bill, or about Henderson's attempts to draw a revolver on me, for that was a part of Bill's plan to aid me in my escape; and, besides, that was a secret that was locked in my own breast until we got to sea.

"Poor Sam won't want his money any more," said I. "I saw the place where he lost his life. But the other two cowboys I didn't see. I hope they are at Mr. Chisholm's."

I never slept so well in that ranch as I did that night, for I looked upon it as a little short of a miracle that my party had all come back to me. They had travelled all the way to Austin twice, and had never seen an Indian. That was better than I did, for I wanted to tell of the scenes I had witnessed in that camp, but there was no need of it. When morning came, and we started on our way, I kept a close watch of the prairie almost in fear of seeing some of Bill's band, but they had taken their eight hundred cattle away to

be slaughtered, and I never saw them again. Eight hundred cattle, did I say? I believed they had more than that. By separating his band after the attack on the paymaster was made, the chief had been able to attack half a dozen ranches almost at the same moment, and got away with some cattle at each place. I thought that eight thousand head of stock would more nearly fill his bill. In due time we pulled up at Mr. Chisholm's ranch just at supper time, and there I saw something that made me feel good—a couple of fellows sitting in chairs, who were evidently too badly hurt to move about. The one had an arrow through his foot, the other had something the matter with his arm; but the way they greeted us proved that there was nothing the trouble with their lungs. They were the two cowboys who had been out with Sam Noble herding stock. But they had not seen me when I was captured, they were miles away by that time, and so I breathed easy.

"Well, by gum! if you fellows aint here yet," said Mr. Chisholm. "Where did you leave the Indians?"

"Didn't see any while we were gone," said Bob, who ran up the stairs to the porch and fairly hugged the wounded cowboys. "How do you do, anyway? You have seen some Indians, haven't you? How did you boys manage to escape?"

It was a story that was soon told. The Indians got after them down at the gully—how well I remembered where it was!—and killed Sam and his horse dead at the first fire. The others threw themselves behind their horses, Indian fashion, and got safely off, if we except the two arrows that went through them.

"But my money is what troubles me," said the one who did the talking. "My money is what bothers me, dog-gone 'em! They went to our ranch an' got everything we had."

"How do you know?" asked Bob. "I slept at the ranch last night, and found something."

"I guess you dug it up before you went away, didn't you?" said the cowboy, who was overjoyed to hear that his money was safe. "I can rest easy now. That's what comes of having a friend."

That night, after supper, the money which Bob had taken the precaution to carry with him, when running from the Indians, was again paid out to the men with the exception of the thousand dollars due Sam Noble. This was paid to Mr. Chisholm in the hope that some of his heirs might claim it, when it was to be given to them. Then our errand was broached—that we were going to the States—and it threw a damper on all of them, all except Mr. Chisholm. He had been thinking about it ever since the attack was made upon the paymaster, and to our surprise and delight he said:

"Boys, it is the best thing you can do, and the sooner you get about it the better you will suit me. If you were my own boys who were going off I couldn't feel worse about it. But you don't say anything about Elam."

"He doesn't want to go," said Bob. "But we are coming back here again, or at least to Denver, and if he will buy some cattle and get back there by next summer, we will see him."

"I can't go," said Elam. "I don't belong in that country anyway."

The next thing was to arrange it so that Elam could work for some of the cowboys during the winter, and so be on hand to buy the cattle when spring opened up. Finding the two wounded cowboys there with Mr. Chisholm slightly interfered with our plans, for now we were compelled to divide the stock into four instead of two equal parts; but the cowboys were all in favor of it, and each one agreed to take Elam as long as he was willing to stay with them. But Elam was already satisfied with the arrangements he had made with Lem and Frank, and concluded he would stay with them. When he made this decision he got up and went out of doors. I could see that Bob didn't like it a bit. He wished he could prevail upon Elam to go North with him.

"It isn't any use," said Mr. Chisholm. "He belongs down here, and here he is going to stay. Now let's go to bed, all of us. In the morning I will have you up at the first peep of day."

The next morning we ate breakfast by the aid of the light thrown out by the camp fire

on the hearth, and before we were fairly done we received the order "catch up." I tell you it was hard work to part from those wounded cowboys, for we had known them longer than we had anybody else. The one who had the arrow through his arm insisted that he would go to Austin with us, but Mr. Chisholm, like Uncle Ezra in a similar case, "put his foot down," and said he should stay right there on the ranch and never go out of it until he came back. We waved our hats to them as long as we remained in sight, and when the neighboring swells hid them from view, we felt that we had parted from some of our best friends. In due time we reached Austin and put up at the same hotel we stopped at before, only Lem and Frank didn't receive orders to sit on the porch and look out for Henderson. We all put away our horses and bent our steps toward the bank. The cashier was there, and he said Mr. Wallace was in his private office. He was busy with his papers,—in fact he always seemed to be busy,—but he laid them down when we came in.

"Hello, Chisholm," said he. "What's up?"

"These boys here have made up their minds to go to the States, and I want to sign Bob's papers," said he. "Get 'em all out so't I can have them off'n my mind."

"Ah, yes! sit down," said the banker. "Bob, how are you? You see, you didn't go through any forms the last time you were here, and I must have some now. If this boy is going to take his money away from me and deposit it in some Northern bank, I must have a paper which authorizes me to give up the money. It was all right before, but it has got to be changed now," he added, when he saw Mr. Chisholm double up his huge fist and move it up and down over the table. "Sit down, and I'll send for a lawyer to come right here."

It was all very easy for the banker to say "sit down," but Mr. Chisholm preferred to stand, seeing that none of his men could be seated at the same time. Mr. Wallace sent for a lawyer, giving some instructions which I did not understand, and in a few minutes the

gentleman made his appearance with a roll of papers in his hand. He received some orders from Mr. Wallace, and in less time than it takes to tell it the document was ready for his signature. Mr. Chisholm protested, but he signed his name, and then the money was ready for Bob; the banker presenting him with the box which contained his stocks and bonds, and with a check drawn on a bank on New Orleans for the rest of his funds.

"Now, Bob, good-by," said the banker, rising to his feet and extending his hand. "I hope you will get through with your money safe. Don't let anybody steal it from you."

"Steal it?" echoed Bob.

"Certainly. You will find plenty of people on the road who will gladly relieve you of that box. Put it in your trunk, and stand guard over it day and night."

"By George! I never thought of that," said Bob, looking distressed. "Elam, you come with me. Mr. Chisholm and Tom will have to go with the rest to call upon that paymaster."

Tom Mason knew where to find the pay-

master's office, and with the distinct understanding that he was to ask for one thousand dollars for returning that money, we left the banker, and Bob pursued his way to his hotel. We found the paymaster there, and he recognized Tom the moment he came in.

"You're back already, aint you?" said he. "Well, I haven't heard from Washington yet, but I tell you plainly that I don't think you will receive more than one-tenth of the sum you returned to us. Five hundred dollars will more than pay you for that."

"These boys have made up their minds to go to the States," said Mr. Chisholm.

"Very well. You have a power of attorney, I suppose?"

"No, I haven't got that," said Mr. Chisholm, wondering what new "form" he would have to go through.

"You will have to go to an attorney to get it," said the paymaster. "Of course, if he is going away, I shall have to have authority to pay the money to somebody."

"By gum! Bring on the paper," said Mr.

Chisholm, looking around for a chair in which to seat himself.

"But I haven't got the paper here. You will have to go to a lawyer to get it."

Mr. Chisholm slowly went out of the paymaster's office, and we all followed him. He kept on without saying a word, and finally he stopped in the office of the surrogate—the same man who had looked into his pistol when he was here before. In a few words he made known to him the situation.

"Why, certainly; you must have a power of attorney if you want to get the money," said the surrogate. "I will make you out one in five minutes, But, mind you, you needn't show it until you see a chance of getting the money."

This new "form" was complied with, and Mr. Chisholm paid the surrogate the sum of ten dollars for his paper. In fact, I noticed that he didn't charge less than ten dollars for anything. On the way back to the hotel Tom offered him the money, but Mr. Chisholm waved it aside.

"I am willing to pay ten dollars to have my

eyes opened," said he. "If anybody ever gets me to sign any papers again, I want to know it. I am done probating wills."

Bob was considerably disappointed when he found that Tom wasn't going to get his money, but of course he saw that it was all right. The next day we spent in buying clothes, and devoted the next to the purchase of souvenirs to remind Tom of his cattle life in Texas. On the next day Tom's letter came. Some parts of it were brief and to the point, and ran as follows:

> You had better come home now, and forget all about that five thousand dollars. You didn't take it anyway, and why should the matter be laid to you? Your uncle walks with a cane, and was so excited over your letter that he brought it to me to reply to it. Come home and see him at any rate.

Tom Mason was in dead earnest to go home after receiving that letter. He never expected to receive a letter like that from Joe Coleman, but then Joe wasn't down on him any more than the rest of "Our Fellows" were. The very next day we brought our trunks down, all ready to take the stage to Houston by way

of Clinton, six miles from the sea. Mr. Chisholm was there as well as the cowboys, but I couldn't see anything of Elam. I had already given him my horse, and the way he received it told me that he considered that a good-by.

"Well, boys, if I don't see you again, hallo," said Mr. Chisholm, hastily drawing his hand across his eyes. "You are going far away, and there's no knowing what will happen to you. So-long."

We got aboard, the driver cracked his whip, and we were whirled away from some of the best friends a man ever had. Bob was very lonely after that, and it was only when he reached Clinton and saw the steamer that was to carry him across the Gulf to New Orleans, that he recovered his usual spirits. Tom Mason now assumed charge—he was more at home in that line of business than we were—and in less than half an hour after we reached Clinton we were aboard the ship, our passage paid, and we were sitting on the deck watching the stevedores at their labor. This I thought to be a good time for my story, and I brought out the revolver with Clifford

Henderson's name on the trigger-guard, and for an hour those fellows scarcely interrupted me. They listened spellbound. When I was through they drew a long breath of relief.

"You have kept your word, if it was made to an outlaw," said Bob. "Now, what do you suppose his object was? He has always seen something about you that took his eye."

"I am as much in the dark as you are," I replied. "I only know that he saved me from death."

For a long time after this Coyote Bill was our principal subject of conversation, until the steamer got under way, and then we had other topics to talk about. In due time we arrived in New Orleans and there we spent just one day, in order to deposit our money in the bank. We did not know how long we should remain at Tom Mason's home, and we thought that would be the best place for it. At four o'clock we took passage on a steamer from which we were not to get off until we reached Tom's destination. The torches were lighted when we drew up to the landing, but we saw there a carriage and an old gray-

headed man leaning on a cane. I knew it was General Mason before Tom spoke.

"There's my uncle!" he exclaimed, almost wild with delight. "My goodness, how he has changed!"

Tom ran down to the forecastle and cleared the long jump of ten feet to reach the bank, and hastened up to where the old man stood. We turned away, for we did not care to see that meeting between uncle and nephew, and when we got our luggage ashore, and the steamer was backing out to continue her journey up the river, Tom came down to us. It was the first time I had seen him cry, but he blew his nose with a blast like a trumpet.

"These are the boys who stood up for me when I was friendless and alone," said he. "Bob Davenport and Carlos Burnett. I really wish Elam was here, so that you could shake him by the hand, for he is the one who took me up when I was starving."

"Where is he?" ejaculated the old gentleman, who tried not to show how delighted he was. "Go and get him. I want to see him."

As it was somewhere near a thousand

miles to the place where we had left Elam, we didn't say anything about going after him. We passed it off in some way, and followed the old man into the carriage. We didn't go to sleep at all that night, for the general was anxious to hear where we had been, and what we had been doing, since Tom went away. When day broke I went on the porch and looked around. There was a splendid plantation; everything was in apple-pie order, and a host of servants ready to do his bidding, and what Tom could make by running away from a home like that, I didn't see. I expressed as much to him when he came out there later.

"Because I was a fool," said he. "Nobody could make anything by running away from a home like this, but I tell you it has opened my eyes. I feel as if I had got among friends from whom I have long been separated."

That day I made the acquaintance of "Our Fellows," who rode down to see us, and I tell you I found them good fellows, every one. Tom Mason was getting up on a par with Sandy Todd now, for with this exception he was head and shoulders above every one of

them. His sleeping in the open air for almost a year had done wonders for him.

We haven't been to the plains yet to settle up with Uncle Ezra and to see Elam, but we are going as soon as spring opens. After that Tom will settle down as he used to be before, only he will have the management of the plantation. I have been hunting on several occasions with "Our Fellows," and if you could see Tom when he was toasting his shins in front of our camp-fire and telling his stories, you would say that none of his adventures ever had so great an effect on him as those that befell him in Texas.

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day, after a hard Saturday's work—the other boys had been out skating on the brick-pond—I shyly broached the subject to my mother. I felt the need of some sympathy. She listened in amazement, and then said: "Why, do you think you could write a book like that?" That settled the matter, and from that day no one knew what I was up to until I sent the first four volumes of Gunboat Series to my father. Was it work? Well, yes; it was hard work, but each week I had the satisfaction of seeing the manuscript grow until the "Young Naturalist" was all complete.

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